



CLIMBING the HEIGHTS BY

MARTHA ELLEN HALE



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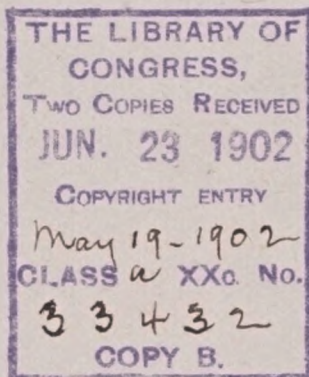
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CLIMBING THE HEIGHTS

CHAPTER I.

"All day, all night, I hear the jar
Of the loom of life, and near and far
It thrills with its deep and muffled sound
As the tireless wheels go round and round."

Glints of golden sunshine, trill of birds songs, sigh of South wind, and the breath of early Spring blossoms without. Within was the gray mantle of death, gradually but surely enveloping one whose voice already sounded faint and far away. Silent in my agony, I listened to the loving admonition of a dying mother.

"My child," she said, "come nearer and listen to me. I know you are very young for such a great responsibility as the care of your little sister, but darling, you are not childish, as your years indicate. Henceforth you must be mother, sister, friend and all to Ulrica. In a short time you two will be all alone in the world, but for your father. He will never understand the needs of a tender little flower like your sister. Olive, dear, try and dry your tears," she went on in broken accents, "and do not forget the lessons you have learned at my knee. Always bow to the will of God. Kiss the rod that smites you; and lead Ulrica into the narrow way. To comfort you

darling, I can truthfully say that I thank God for the gift of such a dutiful child as you have ever been."

"But mother," I sobbed, "you mst not leave us. You will live many many years. What will we do without you?"

"Darling, gladly would I stay with you if it was so ordained," came the answer in a strangely altered voice, "but it cannot be."

There was silence for a brief space and I hid my face in the coverlet and stifled bitter sobs. When I again looked at her face which had grown so white, I knew that the end was near. I ran and brought my sister from the adjoining room and called frantically to my father who was pacing the garden paths outside. My mother turned her dying eyes upon the child I held in my arms with a last loving look.

So it was that the death angel, hovering near all that bright, cloudless spring morning, took our dearest earthly treasure from us to grace a mansion above, and we were left to fight Life's battles alone. Oh, no, not alone! together my little sister and I would be while life lasted. I vowed to myself there by my dead mother's side, that I would ever walk before, smoothing out the pathway of Life, lest my darling's tender feet be pierced by sharp thorns or bruised by jagged stones. In my youthful ignorance I did not know that each has a separate path, which no other can travel for him.

Of my father I will speak but little, for I knew then as I do now, that he was careless beyond words to tell of his children's happiness.

When all that was earthy of our dear mother was

laid to rest, our small cottage was sold, with all its contents. Scarcely a fortnight elapsed when we left it forever. Oh, the agony of that breaking up of our home! That home which was hallowed by the memory of a loving lost presence and was to be ruthlessly invaded by strangers. As the little front gate closed behind us, I turned to take a last look at that home which was home no longer, where had been passed all the short, bright years of my life. Oh, care-free, happy childhood! Even yet the small village of Brookville, Pa., seems the dearest spot on earth to me. Though I have wandered far from its borders, still do I think of it as home. True, we were not to leave the village at once, yet I never went to view the old familiar surroundings, for the sight I could not bear.

There was but one thing left to console me, and that was the companionship of my sister. I clasped her little hand closely in mine as we started for our new home, never doubting that our father had made arrangements for us to be together. When he informed us that we were to be separated I looked at him in a dazed sort of a way, and could scarcely speak for the indignation that choked my utterance.

"Why father," I at length faltered, "you cannot intend to part us. I promised mother that I would always care for Ulrica. She must go where I go," I concluded resolutely.

"Well, well, Olive, I have made other arrangements," he answered. "Certainly you can be together occasionally, but I have been unable to find a home for you and Ulrica in the same family."

My tears flowed afresh on hearing his words.

"Olive," he said impatiently, "you are a very trying child; at another time I would chastise you severely."

But I did not heed his words. The thought of losing the companionship of my little sister seemed more than I could bear. Oh, yes, I groveled in the dust of the highway along which we were passing and pleaded with him not to part us. I told him my promise to my dying mother was sacred, it must not be broken. Thro' my mist of tears, I saw no relenting in his face, nothing but impatience was where there should have been loving sympathy for my anguish.

"Father," I cried, "we have only one another now, and you are going away, leave us together. I will work for Ulrica. I will do anything to keep her with me."

"Olive, get up at once and obey me," broke in his voice, cold and cutting. "I have made my arrangements; you and your sister must abide by them."

"It will break her heart to leave me," I cried desperately.

"No such thing will happen," he answered carelessly. "Give her a new toy and in fifteen minutes she will be as happy as though you had never existed."

My mother was right, I thought bitterly. He knows nothing of the child's tender loving nature. My heart was hardened by his cruelty and all affection for him died a natural death in that hour.

My sister was five, and I twelve years of age when we were thus ruthlessly thrown on the world. And how my darling clung to me when the moment of parting arrived. Even now I seem to feel the soft

dimpled arms clasped about my neck and the tears falling on my cheek as the childish faltering voice begged to stay with me always. Oh, that childhood could be spared all such agonizing trials.

But I will not linger on the recital of our woes, or of how my poor little sister shrank from the hard-visaged woman with whom I was compelled to leave her. Mrs. Durkin was a widow and owned the small boarding house which she kept in the village. She made many promises to my father in regard to what she would do for the child. No doubt he believed he was doing an advantageous thing for her when he gave her into the keeping of the woman who was destined to exert such a baneful influence over her future.

For me had been found an asylum in the home of a family where there were three small children who were endeavoring to reach the proper age that I might act in the capacity of a governess as well as nursery maid, thereby paying for my bed and board. Meanwhile I attended the village school and my one desire then was to gain knowledge sufficient to teach. I fondly hoped that some day I could support my sister and myself in comfort. I pictured a little vine wreathed cottage with my darling waiting each evening for my homecoming.

"Oh vain visions of youth! O, poverty, how many quivering hearts are crushed beneath thy grinding heel! How many heavy-eyed sorrows are dragged in thy Wake!

Each Sabbath day I was permitted to spend with my sister I would see the little face watching for me at the window as I drew near, when it would disap-

pear for a moment, only to reappear at the door and she would come swiftly to meet me with smile chasing away her childish sorrow with wind-blown curls and dancing eyes. I would catch her to my heart, raining kisses on the upturned face of my one treasure. Small wonder that I loved her so, even as a mother loves her child.

Almost two years passed in this way. My father had been absent from the village during that time, but had returned again and taken up his residence permanently in order to be near us. I did not know what his occupation had been during that time of absence, nor what it was then.

The last day of many which I spent with my sister was one remembered by me. It was one of those dark winter days when the leaden sky overhangs the snowbound earth like a pall. A day such as casts a gloom over the brightest spirit. But nothing short of death could have kept me from her on those days. So when the hour came for my departure this day, I tore myself away from her and was some distance from the house when I heard her calling my name pitifully as she ran after me through the snow drifts.

"Oh, Olive, she says you can't come any more, you always make me cry. Take me with you, sister. I will be so good. I can work," and she reached out her little hands to prove her capacity of labor.

"Oh, do take me with you," and clinging to my skirts she sobbed most pitifully as she resumed. "She will beat me when you are gone. She does it lots of times. She told me never to tell you, but I can't help it now."

Oh, heaven, what was I to do? I looked at the little one as she stood there with chubby legs half bared to the bitter cold, her imploring, frightened little face raised to mine. A horrible pain pierced my heart. Was this the way I was fulfilling my promise to my dead mother. What if she at that very moment was beholding the anguish in the helpless child's face as she implored me to rescue her from her unhappy surroundings. Taking her hand in mine, I started to retrace my steps striving to allay her fears with soothing words.

"Oh, Olive, I can't go back there!" she cried, hiding her face and still clinging to my skirts as Mrs. Durkin made her appearance at the door, a heavy whip in her hand.

"Olive, I'd rather stay out here and freeze to death," she sobbed, "than go back there. Only take me with you."

I took her in my arms and waded back through the snow and demanded her wraps that I might take her away and find another home for her.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Mrs. Durkin. "Why that puny little creature belongs to me as tight as the law can bind her. You may come in and see the papers if you like."

I was speechless with amazement. Had my father done this thing, knowing almost nothing of the woman? I asked myself despairingly.

"You little mischief," she cried vindictively, looking at my sister. "Let go her skirts I say, and get in this house."

At this the little one but clung closer to me, fright-

ened and trembling. I knew I was powerless to protect her at that time and I fell on my knees to that hardened creature. With streaming eyes I begged her to be kind to my little darling for the love of Heaven; for the sake of her own little child who was dead. I begged her to remember that we had no mother. I spared no words in striving to soften her heart.

Perhaps it was my stricken face, perhaps it was the memory of her dead child which moved her, for she permitted me to take the heavy whip from her hand and promised not to use it on the trembling child. I took my sister into the house and repressing my tears with an effort, strove to comfort her. I remained another hour and succeeded in calling a wan little smile to her face by picturing some future joy for us. Again I made myself ready to leave her. Oh, the tears that would come unbidden to the little eyes and the low sobbing which she strove so hard to suppress, tore at my heart as the very agony of death.

"Olive," she said, "I know she will beat me when you are gone, but I just can't help crying. It's all so lonely."

"Be brave darling," I whispered, "and try to be happy."

"It's no use to try, I can't away from you," she declared dismally.

"I will be here on the Sabbath, dear," I said, "that will not be long," and kissing her small tear-wet face, I went away through the fast gathering darkness, not daring to look backward once lest she see my own grief-stricken face.

The following day I went straight to my father and implored him to take my sister from Mrs. Durkin. Listening silently to my pleadings for a time, he interrupted me impatiently with, "Well, well, Olive, you come to me with tears, always tears. I shall be extremely thankful when you arrive at the age where you recognize the fallacy of shedding tears without the slightest provocation. I assure you it is a most wearisome, disagreeable habit. This is nothing but sheer nonsense about Ulrica being ill-treated by Mrs. Durkin. Every child must be chastised occasionally. I made all necessary inquiries as to her character and believe her to be a woman of exceptional merit. I think your sister is very fortunately situated. I have provided for the material wants of both you and her and occasioned myself no little trouble in doing so. And, Olive," he added sharply, "once for all I warn you to have done with your foolish complaints for I will listen to no more of them."

He turned to his papers once more and I was left standing in the center of the room too miserable and angry to care what I did or said.

"Father," I at length cried out, "you are not worthy to be blessed with a little child like Ulrica. I will take her away. I will be her protector. I hope with all my heart that I may never, never see you again."

As I rushed from the room, I heard him say, "Oh, that terrible temper of hers; it will yet be her ruin."

Perhaps I was too bitter in my anger toward my father, but the memory of it has troubled me but little even though I have had my wish, for I have never

looked upon him since that day or heard any tidings from him.

The following days were heavy ones for me and when the Sabbath came again I hastened away that I might be with my dear one as soon as possible. But as I drew near no little feet came tripping to meet me. No glad voice fell on my ear. What could it portend. My heart almost stood still with the fear of some impending calamity. A stranger with kindly face greeted me at the door. I inquired for Mrs. Durkin and my sister in a stifling voice.

"Oh, you be the little one's sister? Why they've left town," was the startling answer. With pitying eyes turned upon me, she cried: "Come in dearie, and I'll tell you all about it."

I stepped across the threshold and sank despairingly into a chair.

"I hate to tell you," she began hesitatingly, "but then it's my duty and I must. The night afore they left, last Thursday night it was, you see I moved in that day, Mrs. Durkin was makin' ready to go and told the little one that she would never see you again, that she was going to take her where you couldn't find her. At that the little one began to cry and not bein' able to let up when she was told to, that critter took down a whip and begun to beat her with it. I couldn't hold myself at that, so I just flung the door open an' jerked the whip out of her hand and give her a stripe right across the face. An she'll carry the mark for many a day too, just as the little one will where she all but cut the hide. Oh, the great blue marks on them little bare legs. I just can't bear to

think on it." And the good woman broke completely down, but she strove for my sake to hide her tears in the folds of her kitchen apron.

As for my own, they were dried up by flaming anger. I dared not dwell on the picture which that kind soul had so deftly painted to the mind's eye.

"You seem a young thing yourself, to be knockin' about in the world," she continued presently, laying a gentle hand on my bowed head. I caught that hand and kissed it again and again, for had it not protected my darling? Oh, may Heaven bless all such tender kindly souls! They shine out from their rough exterior like a ray of sunshine breaking through the darkest cloud.

"Where is your father, child?" she inquired.

"Curse my father!" I cried bitterly. "Oh, my dear, dear woman, tell me where they have gone," I cried, almost frantic with impatience, as I started toward the door. "I shall steal my sister. We will be tramps, anything, if we are together."

"Yes, yes, dearie," she said. "I followed her to the depot, unbeknown to her, and she called for a ticket to New York City. I couldn't find you, not knowin' where you stayed, so I made it my affair to see where she took the little one."

I told her that Heaven would reward her for the interest she had taken in my little sister. I went back over the road I had traversed so hopefully less than an hour gone. Black despair filled my heart, but well I knew that that was not the time to falter, but the time to act.

I waited for the coming of darkness, meanwhile

laying my plans. I would let no one know where I went. I would work my way to New York City. I would walk. I would steal rides on freight cars. Oh, yes, I would find my darling soon.

"Sister is coming to you, sweet," I said over and over to myself. I counted the contents of my purse which all told amounted to two dollars and thirty-five cents. But the smallness of the sum did not daunt me.

Oh, could I but have looked into the future with its many, many dreary days which were to intervene between the present time and the day on which I was to behold her sweet face again, I could have died of despair. How wisely it is ordained that we are denied this foresight. Surely it is the angel of mercy which holds the veil between the future and our longing eyes.

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CHAPTER II.

We see a sorrow rising in our way,
And try to flee from the approaching ill;
We seek some small escape; we weep and pray;
But when the blow falls then our hearts are
still;
Not that the pain is of its sharpness shorn,
But that it can be borne.

Alas; traveling without money was not so easily accomplished as I in my inexperience supposed. Useless to relate the difficulties which beset my pathway ere I reached my longed for destination. In the darkness of that night I slipped away and walked to the next station, caring not for the snow and cold. I rode on a railway train as far as my money would pay my way.

As I said, it is quite useless to tell of how I implored flinty hearted conductors to permit me to proceed on my way, telling them my story, of how I was deposited on the platform of the next station and told that they were used to such tales as mine; of how I would go hungry wandering in search of work that I might earn money and start on my way again. Suffice it to say, it was Springtime ere I arrived in New York City. And oh, that great, great city; teeming with its surging mass of peoples each one bent upon his or her own affair, confusing all my ideas, making chaos of all my plans. Endless streets of which I knew not the name of a single one. Row after row of brick walls confront-

ing me on every side. How could I ever hope to find my little sister in that great metropolis?

I wandered aimlessly about with tired, dragging footsteps until the slanting shadows on the pavements warned me that I must seek an asylum for the night. It wounded my pride sorely to ask for charity, but when I reflected that it was for her dear sake it ceased to be painful, so great was my love for her. I bore patiently the insults that were heaped upon me by the hard visaged women when I asked them to shelter me for the night. After all what right had I to expect them to give me their sympathy. But at last, long after darkness had closed down, I found my way to a small boarding house and they were in need of help in the kitchen. That dirty, ill-smelling kitchen; the boisterous slang of the employees seemed like a stray corner of heaven to my weary sight and hearing.

Two weary years I remained there and gained the sobriquet of Miss Silence, for I took no interest in passing events. I doubt even if I once smiled during those years. All my thoughts were centered in my little lost sister. All my sunshine lay in starry eyes; all my joy in her smiles and I saw them not. Oh, but those were bitter, bitter years for me; and I oftentimes cried out in my loneliness that God had forsaken me.

The greater part of my earnings I gave to a policeman, who promised to search for Mrs. Durkin, and at length he obtained her address. I rushed to the house like a whirlwind and rang the bell.

"Yes," said the woman who answered my inquiries for Mrs. Durkin, "she lives on the next floor—turn to the left—No. 14."

I ran up the steps and knocked on the door. My heart was wildly fluttering; soon, soon I would clasp my darling in my arms once more. Mrs. Durkin opened the door and recognized me at once.

"I have found you at last," I cried breathlessly. "I want Ulrica."

She gazed blankly at me a moment and then cried, "Do you mean to say that you don't know where she is?"

"She is here," I declared promptly, "and you shall keep us apart no longer."

Pushing past her I entered the room and called my sister's name in my eagerness, but there was no answer.

"Olive Holbrook, I haven't seen your sister for over six months. The ungrateful little wretch ran away. I felt sure that you had followed us and taken her. I have neither time nor money to search for her, but if I ever do find her she shall rue the day she left me," declared Mrs. Durkin vindictively.

I was convinced by her tones that she was speaking the truth. So I turned at once and left her, not knowing to what act or speech my anger toward her might lead me. Intermingled with despair in my heart was a great thankfulness, for my little one had at least escaped the abuse of that creature. I consoled myself by believing that she could scarcely fall into worse hands.

Once more I began my weary search. Five more years with their bloom and decay passed by with leaden footsteps. What cared I for song bird or odorous breath of summer blossoms if my lost darling did not share them with me? During these last years I ob-

tained employment in a dressmaking establishment and at length began to realize that chance alone must give me back my little sister who, if living, was then fourteen years of age. How I longed for gold to give to the hounds of the law. I believed she could be found, but the key that would unlock the door of her hiding place must be a golden one, I told myself in bitterness of spirit. How our dark river of separation might have been bridged over by the use of the glittering dross; a bridge, indeed, where we might meet and stand heart to heart once more.

More than seven years had passed since I had walked away through the snow and left her on that memorable day. Again the Springtime was hovering over the earth with many sweet sights and sounds, and one Sabbath day I was returning to my place of abode from the house of worship which I attended, when a carriage dashed up and came to a standstill by the pavement. The driver sprang down and assisted a lady to alight. The other occupants of the carriage were two children and a nurse maid. The badge of servitude I recognized in the white cap and apron. I stood quite still and gazed into the face beneath that white cap. Dear Heaven, dear Heaven, could such happiness be for me? Could it be my little one?

A light of joy—just such joy as I had pictured hundreds of times in the past weary years—rushed into that face. Still we stood and gazed at each other, afraid to grasp at our happiness lest it be frightened away. But at length I breathed her name.

“Olive, Olive, it is I!” she cried, springing to the pavement, and at last I held my darling close to my

heart once more. Oh, joy unspeakable! I forgot time, place and all things save her presence and kissed again and again her sweet face.

"Mary," broke in a cold, haughty voice, "I am surprised at this scene. You and this person are attracting attention. If you wish to hold your present position, you will command yourself at once."

"Oh, Mrs. Horner, this is my sister from whom I have been parted so long," she said, turning her bright face, which was like a bedewed rose to the freezing glance bent upon her. But no glance however cold could chill the happiness in our united hearts.

"She is coming with me," I said, decisively.

"Not unless she goes to stay," was the icy answer.

"Very well," I said, untying the apron strings and lifting the cap from the midnight curls which fell in rich profusion over the white forehead.

Never in my wildest imaginings had I pictured my sister as beautiful as I then found her to be, though but a little unformed girl as yet; I thought her the loveliest creature I had seen for many a day. Her starry eyes, so black and velvety soft, looked out from a face in which there was no trace of color, save in the sweet lips, which rivaled the tenderest rose bud in richness of hue and contour. The black gown she wore revealed more plainly the dazzling clearness of complexion, while her whole make-up was one of indescribable grace and daintiness.

She turned to bid the children farewell. The eldest looked at her disdainfully and said not a word. The other held out both hands and began to cry. Her mother stepped between them, saying coldly:

"I do not permit servants to caress my children. You should be aware of that Mary."

I almost pitied the woman. Surely an unhappy heart lay beneath that frozen exterior. I fully understood that she had never given my sister any sympathy in her loneliness and so gave her none in her joy. We turned and left them. In a vague sort of a way I remember that the passersby looked wonderingly at our happy faces—at my sister's wind-blown curls bared to the blessed sunshine. I did not care should the whole world observe us then. I had my darling's hand in mine once more. I wished that every one might taste of such rapture as mine. I took her straight to my place of abode, reaching my room unobserved.

She was yet a little thing and I took her upon my knee and held her close.

"Tell me everything that has befallen you since we parted, darling," I said. "Keep nothing a secret in order to spare my feelings. Why did Mrs. Horner call you Mary?"

"I feared to give my right name lest Mrs. Durkin find me," she answered sadly.

I groaned inwardly as I thought of the pitiful circumstances which compelled a child of such a tender age to assume a false name.

"Tell me everything," I said again as she still hesitated.

"But Olive," she expostulated, "why recall the past which has been so lonely? Rather let us look into the bright future which lies before us."

But when I still insisted upon the recital of how those years had been passed by her, she reluctantly

complied. As I listened to the tale of cruelties perpetrated upon that defenseless child I realized how utterly I had failed to keep my promise to my dead mother. Oh, that I could have kept my darling's childhood free from such trials. When in the very bitterness of spirit I cried out, "I hope some great misfortune will overtake the inhuman monster who so ill used you," my sister gently chided me, saying:

"No, Olive, rather does she need our pity for her own unhappiness; think how much she misses that which is beautiful in life."

And never in all the after years did she say one hard word of Mrs. Durkin, though she brought a greater sorrow than any which her childhood ever knew.

"The last day I was with her," she went on, "I angered her by breaking a dish, thereby ruining a set she highly prized, and she dragged me a short distance from the house and beat me until the blood came. When she had done she left me, saying, 'When you have finished your whining come to the house. I have more work for you.'

"I threw myself on the ground and called your name, Olive, for it was a comfort to me; then some one touched my hair and smoothing it back from my swollen face, said gently, 'Poor little girl.' I looked up and saw a boy much younger than myself standing beside me looking so pityingly that I knew him for a friend. When he questioned me I told him everything.

" 'Why don't you run away?' he asked me as he dried my tears from my face with his handkerchief. 'I know a lady who wants a nice little girl to play

with her baby. You can go there,' he said, reassuringly.

"'But how can I get away?' I asked him, my heart sinking suddenly from the upward flight it had taken.

"'I will take you as far as the railway station and tell you how to find the place,' he answered readily. 'It is not over ten miles from here. Come out at 9 o'clock to-night and I will be right here waiting.'

"I promised that I would come, and then hurried back to the house, joyfully anticipating the coming of the night. My heart was bounding with the thought of having the care of a real baby whom I could kiss and love."

"What did Mrs. Durkin do for a living?" I inquired.

"I do not know," she answered, "but a great many people would drive out to her house every evening and remain until nearly morning. She always sent me to bed very early and I never saw any of them, but they often woke me with their loud talking and swearing. It was horrible, but I always longed for the night that I might rest and be alone," and she shuddered at the remembrance of that past time.

In turn I shuddered as I realized from her meager description what sort of a woman it was from whom she had escaped. What could the place have been but one of those gambling dens which exist in the suburbs of all great cities? Claspings my dear one close, I mentally thanked Heaven for her deliverance, as she told me how that young friend of her's came as he had promised and rescued her from that den of vice; how he had walked with her to the nearest station and placed her on a seat by an old gentleman, putting in her

hand a slip of paper on which was the address of Mrs. Horner, to whom she was to go, also a letter to that lady begging her to keep the little girl whom he sent.

"But dear, how did you find the home of Mrs. Horner; you a little child all alone in this great city?" I asked her.

"I went out into the streets inquiring of those whom I met, showing them the address. I finally reached the place some time in the afternoon. But it was such a tall, fine building with the gardens so beautifully kept and everything on such a grand scale, I was afraid to go in lest they turn me away. I wandered around and finally gained the courage to go to the back door. The cook allowed me to enter and I told her I had come to take care of the baby.

"I know she pitied me from the way she looked as she patted me on the head kindly and said, 'I don't believe Mrs. Horner will keep you.' She gave me something to eat, but I was too miserable to swallow a morsel until I knew if I could stay or not. She then sent word to Mrs. Horner and I was told to follow the house maid to the drawing room. The reception that I received there froze the tears in my eyes before they could fall. Mrs. Horner looked me over as she might a dirty dog and I scarcely dared to raise my eyes from the floor. Oh, Olive, why do you wish me to recall that time," she exclaimed with a burst of tears. "I was so lonely and heartbroken, and as I look back I see a shrinking little creature standing like a criminal who is being judged for some heinous crime. Mrs. Horner was a mother, and yet she had no compassion upon the homeless little wretch who was starving for one kind

word. With that withering glance still bent upon me she said disdainfully:

“‘I cannot imagine who has sent this creature to me.’

“I gave her the note that I still held tightly in my hand. After perusing it she said in a somewhat mollified tone, ‘Ah, it is from that dear boy Horace. He is always befriending some one.’ Looking at me again she said coldly, ‘You may remain as I am greatly in need of some one to attend to my youngest daughter, who is fourteen months of age. And remember,’ she added sharply, ‘if you neglect her at any time you shall be cast adrift in the streets.’

“She called the house maid, who had lingered near the door, and ordered her to make me presentable in some of Isabel’s cast-off clothing. Isabel was near my own age.”

“Did Mrs. Horner never question you in regard to your former home,” I asked.

“Never a word, and she scolded me but once during all the time I was beneath her roof,” she answered. “That was for kissing baby Grace, whom I had grown to love so dearly. And now, dear Olive, all the dark days are over,” she cried. “We shall be so happy! You must tell me of your misfortunes now. I fear I have caused you much grief, dear,” she added, regretfully.

I related all the story of my long and fruitless search, but my sorrow was all of the past—I then believed. Oh, foolish, inexperienced youth! Sorrow must needs attend us to the grave, else where is the joy of life, for truly life unattended by sorrow is also devoid of joy, which comes only from contrast.

CHAPTER III.

“Yet in herself she dwelleth not
Although no home were half so fair,
No simple duty is forgot
Life hath no dim and lowly spot
That doth not in her sunshine share.”

That evening I went below and asked the good-natured cook for a lunch. I wished to dine in my own room, I told her. On my way back I met Mrs. Mason, the landlady, in the hall. She glanced at my beaming face and asked, “Have you heard good news, Miss Holbrook,”

“The best in the world,” I answered, as I ran lightly up the steps, eager to be with my sister. But I would tell no one of my discovery on that first day of our reunion, for I must have her all to myself for a time. Each inmate of that modest boarding house knew of and were interested in my search for my lost sister. But I could not spare the time to explain how I found her just then, and when I spread out in most tempting way those viands and bade her partake of them, with a little shudder, a shrinking away and paling of cheek, she cried:

“Oh, Olive, I do not eat flesh, do you?”

Why was it that my eyes fell before her eager, inquiring glance? Why was it that I so longed to be able to answer no?

I set the dish aside and never in her presence has a morsel of flesh passed my lips. Far into the night we

sat, too happy to think of sleep. When I at length kneeled to give thanks for our reunion, my sister did not join me, but stood looking at me with a little sorrowful smile.

When I had done I went to her and said almost fearfully, "Has no one ever taught you to kneel and pray, Ulrica?"

"I do not kneel to my God, Olive," she said. "I am and ever intend to be good enough to stand before Him."

To say I was shocked would but faintly express what I felt on hearing her words.

"Oh, child, child, what can you mean?" I at length found voice to say.

"I mean that I do not ask help outside myself, for the light which shows us the way must come from within," she answered. "Remember, 'work out your own salvation,' and I mean too, that I could not live and worship the poor, weak, faulty God of your conception."

"Ulrica, what fanaticism is this that you are nourishing to such rank growth in your heart?" I cried aghast. Who has dared to plant such ill weeds in a young, immatured mind? You must read the blessed Bible; it will do away with all such thoughts."

"That is where my ideas sprung from," she said, her eyes kindling. "Who can look out upon the sufferings of humanity, the agonies daily endured by living creatures of all sorts, and not ask why these things must be if God is good? Your conception of Him makes Him a respecter of persons, hence these inequalities on every side which entirely refute the idea of

justice, and without justice we are a race without hope. Oh, Olive," she went on, "what a dark and altogether strange idea you have of Him. Believe me, God is naught but the Law. He is no weak, vacillating, personal God, who can be moved by our foolish, childish supplications. Remember, 'I am the same yesterday, to-day and forever,' and this Law we must know with all its mighty secrets, else we will never know God."

"My poor child," I said sadly, "I fear that you have suffered a loss greater than any words can express by being cast adrift in your tender childhood. It is for us to humbly believe the word as it is given us. This great mystery you are striving to solve is beyond the wisest sage's power. Leave it alone and let me lead you back into the narrow way."

"But when one can no longer be content with his blind faith, what then?" she asked.

I was puzzled in finding an answer.

"No, Olive," she declared, shaking her head, "I can never be content without seeking to solve the mysteries of life, the grand mysteries which are called nature, that expands in every tiny blade of grass, in every blossom however minute; that throbs in the very air we breathe; that is as far reaching as all our solar systems; that is as enduring as time itself. Olive, dear, I know you have set ideas and beliefs while my mind is still unformed, and therefore ready to take in what appeals to my understanding as the truth. Believe me, I shall never cease in my efforts to understand the Law. I no longer find it possible to blindly believe and can never sink to your—forgive me—narrow, contracted views."

What was I to do with her, I asked myself fearfully; She so young in years and expressing such ideas! But I consoled myself by believing that those wild, extravagant notions of hers were but vagaries of an immatured mind. It was my sweet duty to lead her straying feet back into the narrow way. Again I asked her who had dared to propound such a doctrine to one so young.

"No one, Olive," she answered. "My ideas came to me from much thinking; indeed, no one ever seemed to remember that I possessed a soul."

I wondered greatly as to how she had procured the amount of learning it was quite evident she possessed, and when I asked her she exclaimed, "Why, Olive, I know so little, so very, very little, and I have so longed for the opportunity and time to gain knowledge. Two years of schooling while at Mrs. Durkin's is all I ever had. But I was often present when Isabel Horner took her lessons, and I listened and remembered all I could and then studied at night. I was permitted to use the piano at times and learned to play a little."

I looked at her eager face for a moment and said, "Ulrica, you must go to school and have music lessons. I think I can manage it."

"Oh, Olive, if it could be done!" she exclaimed, in an ecstasy of delight. "But how could I, and you toiling day by day in order to give me these advantages," she added, while the enthusiasm died out of her face.

"Your welfare and happiness is my one care in life, Ulrica," I answered. "You are all I have in the wide world."

Thoughtfully looking for a moment at me, she said,

"No, Olive, the whole world down to the tiniest atom is one vast brotherhood, bound together by the ties of love. You have the happiness of many to care for."

In that moment I felt the superiority of my sister's mind, as I have ever felt it since. Her words opened up to me more fully the important mission of life, and broader, sweeter duties presented themselves.

No rest could I take that night, and long after she was asleep I sat and watched her. I went to the bedside time after time and kissed her dark curls, her white arms, even as a mother would her babe. Oh, the song of thanksgiving that welled up from my heart that night must indeed have reached the ears of the loving father.

The following evening I hastened home from my work earlier than was my wont in order to make some necessary purchases for my sister. As I was about to decide upon an expensive fabric for a gown, she laid a detaining hand on my arm and said: "Something less costly will do quite as well. Did you see that poor woman who passed us staggering beneath the weight of a basket of clothes, with the puny little child beside her, Olive? I had much rather give the difference to such as they."

Ah, she had taught me a lesson of self-denial. I had failed to even see the poor woman. I, so busy with my own affairs, my own pleasures, had failed to give an unfortunate so much as sympathy. I stood abashed in my sister's presence. "It was for you, Ulrica," I said, humbly.

"I appreciate and understand that, dear," she made ready answer, "but we must always think of others."

I but give this incident, one of many, to show her loving thoughtfulness of others, the abnegation of self. When a few days later I had her robed all in white, it was good to see her delight, keen as a child's when in the first possession of a new toy. After all she was a true daughter of Eve, I thought, with a little thrill of pleasure. I was glad of any sign which assured me of her love for earthly things, for her perfections had begun to pall upon me.

That bright, happy summer sped swiftly by. My sister made arrangements with Mrs. Mason to do little things, as she expressed it, for her board and the use of the piano. I procured a good music master for her and she entered the public school in the autumn. In this manner two years were passed. Oh, those happy, happy days, when she was all in all to me; when I would hasten home from my work and she would greet me with joyful smiles and loving caresses. How glad I was to toil for her, that her life might be brighter and happier. Indeed, in those days it but seemed a blessed privilege to do so.

One day in the early springtime, I entered my room after my day's labor, but perceived no signs of my sister's return from school. When I inquired of Mrs. Mason as to her whereabouts, I was informed that she had not been seen since morning. My thoughts flew to Mrs. Durkin. Could it be possible that she had found my sister and by some subterfuge enticed her away? Wildly alarmed, I went in search of her, and met her hastening up the street with all her school books under her arm.

"I feared that you would be alarmed, Olive," she said, "but I could not possibly come before."

When we had regained our room, she startled me by saying, "Olive, I cannot exist in this idleness any longer. I must earn something."

"But why, dear?" I asked. "We are managing very nicely. You know we have a little money put by in case of sickness, or loss of my employment."

"Yes, I know," she answered, "but I have felt for some time that I was not doing right." The unshed tears were standing in her eyes as she continued. "Oh, Olive, had you seen the poor little sick child with whom I stayed this evening, with its widowed mother weeping over it, crying out that her darling was dying for the very necessities of life, which she was unable to provide, you would think as I do. I want to work for such as they."

I looked at her in astonishment and cried: "Why, child, there are so many such persons in the world you can do nothing to relieve their wants; besides, they have no claim upon you."

"Every living creature in the universe has a claim upon me," she answered.

No argument of mine could induce her to alter her views and determination to work. When I at last demanded her obedience she said: "I am grieved to displease you, dear sister, but in this I cannot obey you."

So it was that I procured an apprenticeship of three months duration for her in a millinery establishment. She spent her evenings poring over her books, until I had to protest lest her health suffer. Knowledge was quite as necessary for her mind as food for her body.

Her Sabbaths were spent with the sick and poor, and as time passed on and she came to draw a salary, with them she divided it, small though it was. And ever as I look back to those days I see more vividly the greatness of her heart compared to my own. Whilst I would attend a fashionable church and pray for the poor, destitute ones, at the same time contributing towards its grand furnishings or the sumptuous living of its pastor, my sister went amongst the poor and suffering ones, giving her mite, ministering to them, mayhap washing up their floors, rocking cross babies to sleep and tidying up the neglected children. Blessed indeed were her ways, though she professed not the God of my worship, for she still held fast to her strange beliefs. But when I saw her following so close in the steps of the blessed One, I ceased to be troubled as to the salvation of her soul.

One Sabbath morning early in June I attended church as usual. The sermon was preached by a stranger from another city. I became deeply interested by the forcible, eloquent manner in which it was delivered and was agreeably surprised when I entered the parlor on my return to find the stranger engaging a summer's board with Mrs. Mason. She introduced him as the Rev. Earnest Blackburn. Why was it that my heart stirred so strangely when his handsome grey eyes rested upon me admiringly? Never before had I thrilled with pride because I was fair to look upon. I had inherited the blonde hair and blue eyes of my mother, and, as my sister told me, was most divinely tall. Little thought had I given to these things before,

for I knew that she would love me were I a fright, and hers was all the love I had ever craved.

Soon after Mrs. Mason left us, my sister entered the room and, observing no one but myself, said sadly, "The little child is dead, Olive."

There were traces of tears on her face. Well did she know when tears held the most healing power for a breaking heart, and she gave them freely, though many hold the inane idea that smiles alone hold cheer for the sorrowful. All during that morning she had been with a poor woman whose little child had been very ill for sometime, and I had been asked to go, but had declined, saying that I must attend church. She had said then, "Better had you give of yourself and your mite in building up the Temple of God's worship in the heart of a fellow creature by some kindly deed."

Ah, were we two weighed in the balance, which would be found wanting? And she so young in years, yet guiding her steps with such wisdom!

As my sister turned to leave the room my glance was attracted toward the open window. A pair of eyes were gazing eagerly at her, eyes that gleamed with the light of a basilisk, and when they left her a moment and rested upon me, I knew we were recognized, and the evil genius of my sister's life, Mrs. Durkin, passed on with a satisfied smile hovering about her lips.

"Is the young lady a relative of yours?" inquired the Rev. Earnest Blackburn, after my sister had gone.

"Young lady!" I exclaimed in surprise, for it came upon me with a shock. "I have never yet regarded my sister as aught but a child," I said.

"She is certainly not a very little child," he said,

smiling at the consternation that must have been written on my face.

After a time I followed her to our room and found her busy—sewing. Sewing! and on the Sabbath day! Fashioning a garment, not for the dead child, but for one who was yet living, and when I protested she said calmly: “If it is right to spend the Sabbath day in idleness, while there are the ill and suffering needing our services, I cannot divine right from wrong, Olive.”

What could I do but take my needle and assist her in finishing the garment, which was for a little fever-racked child, who much needed a fresh, cool gown to allay its sufferings. Did not even Christ think it commendable to appease the pangs of suffering on the Sabbath day?

So it was that the fates had willed that the paths of Mrs. Durkin and my sister should cross once more. I strove but without success to throw off the fear which oppressed me; the fear that the woman would make good her word and cause my sister to rue the day she had left her.

“How foolish I am,” I said to myself over and over. “What could she possibly want with her now?” But that nameless fear would cling to me. I besought my sister to consent to our removal to another boarding place, dear as my few friends and surroundings were to me.

“No, Olive,” she answered, “Mrs. Durkin can surely have no wish to keep me now. Indeed, I think it strange that she ever wanted me. We will not quit the place that is home to us.”

I gave way to her wishes, as indeed I did in almost

all things, for she was the more self-reliant and stronger minded of the two. And as the days and weeks slipped by and three whole months had come and gone, I lost a part of my fear and caution also. Those were sweet days for me, those long ago summer days, when the Rev. Ernest Blackburn would accompany my sister and me in our long evening walks and in our wanderings to some sequestered nook outside the city, where we passed our only day of rest out of the seven when my sister was not with the sick or dying poor. And in those wanderings she ever held some little child by the hand, giving it the joy of a day amid the flowers and butterflies, the cool softness of the green sward and the sweet breathed clover.

The Rev. Ernest Blackburn's business in the city was to complete his studies for the ministry, and ere the summer days were half gone I confessed to myself that I had surrendered my heart to his keeping. Truly the old adage that "true love never runs smoothly" did not apply to our case, for nothing occurred to mar our happiness until—but ah, I must not anticipate.

Vividly does the memory of an early autumn day arise before me, because of the bitter and the sweet interblended which that day brought forth. A party from our boarding house had repaired to the woods for a parting visit ere old father Winter stole away all the beauties of Jack Frost's handiwork. Highways and byways were indeed rich with color. The spot we selected for destination this selfsame autumn visitor must lovingly cover, choosing his brightest paints with which to besprinkle the verdure; for the vivid red of the state-ly old oaks, contrasting with the gold of the swaying

maples, made a most gorgeous background for the bright hued blossoms, summer's parting gift, with which she had strewn the landscape so generously. On this lovely spot was a brook running southward after the departed summer, murmuring joyfully to the grass tufts and blossoms which leaned over its banks nodding encouragement to it on its undertaking, while here and there flitted gaudy winged butterflies sipping the sweets of the day. Over all hung a hazy mist, more beautiful than bridal veil, and through its golden meshes the sunlight kissed the earth softly with a contented sigh. The fluttering leaves, the rippling brook, the chirping insects all sang peace, peace, peace. The golden promises of spring and summer had indeed been fulfilled, and ere the day was done I was a promised bride. As we two stood hand in hand plighted lovers, that golden afternoon, my sister came to us and with a swift glance at my telltale face understood.

"Dear sister, I am glad," she softly said, kissing my cheek; but I saw a shadow pass over her face and I remembered she had once told me that she did not believe in marriage. However, this thought did not detract from my joy, for I could not believe that life held a greater or more noble state of existence than to be queen of a good man's heart.

Soon she left us alone with our happiness, but called back: "Olive, I am going just over that little knoll there for a lovely cluster of goldenrod I saw this morning."

"We will wait here," I called to her.

We watched her move away from us, in her fresh young beauty, beauty which pen is all inadequate to de-

scribe. Surely no artist was ever yet born who could catch and place on canvas the matchless grace of her person, the velvety softness of her midnight eyes, whose changing lights were ever something to marvel over, now tranquil as a summer sea, now heavy with unshed tears for the woes of some suffering creature, now alight with the reflected joy of some little child, now flashing with some lofty thought and deepening with untold worship, as she would stand at night reading the stars or mayhap seeing beyond them, thinking of things which I in my simplicity could never grasp. Thus she was. Ah me, as I remember her on that day. We saw her turn and wave her hand when she gained the summit of the grassy knoll; saw her white-robed figure, which seemed to gather all the light about it, disappear on the opposite side. Yet nothing whispered to me to go after her and draw her back into the safe shelter of my loving arms. Nothing whispered to me of the years that must intervene ere I beheld her dear face again.

We waited there by the brook side until the sun dipped low in the western sky and still she did not return. Mrs. Mason called that we must be starting homeward soon. I sent Ernest—yes, I dared to so call him now—after my sister, but he returned alone! For he had found nothing but the tracks of a light one-horse wagon near the spot where we had last seen her. Then it was the truth flashed upon me. Who save Mrs. Durkin could have devised the atrocious plan of abducting my sister, for I felt assured that such was the cause of her absence. But for what purpose the woman did it I could not surmise. Surely not for

revenge against such a little child as was my sister when she left her.

Across the rosy flame of my new found joy this blow fell with crushing force. Oh, foolish creatures that we are, mapping out our course in life to suit ourselves when the future, whose meaning is the unforeseen, is ever ready to bar our progress and turn our footsteps into a strange path. Alas, what is to be will be, and my poor sister's path was mapped out by higher hands than either hers or mine. My beloved whispered consoling words, fanning to life the one spark of hope still lingering in my heart. He would find her and all would yet be well, he assured me.

Consternation prevailed amid the wondering group when Ernest explained my suspicions to them. It was indeed a sad ending to our day in the woods; and after we had all gone to the place where my sister had disappeared and searched the vicinity over for some clue to her whereabouts, we still found nothing save that the vehicle had turned on the spot and gone toward the city again. Through the fast gathering dusk we returned homeward with gloomy faces, I almost frantic with the fear which uncertainty as to her fate laid upon me.

Ernest reported the disappearance of my sister immediately to the local authorities and search was made, but interest soon died out when there was no money forthcoming. Oh, the weary days that followed—days in which I must carry my grievous burden alone, for Ernest, kind and faithful, had become a self-constituted detective and was gone many days at a time. However, it was all to no purpose. But why prolong

the story of the unfruitful search? Three months dragged themselves into the past and still no tidings of my sister. One day in the latter part of January Ernest returned after an absence of ten days, and I knew by his downcast face that he had again been entirely unsuccessful. There were letters awaiting him from home. One was a call to duty. His flock had grown tired of waiting for their pastor and wished his return.

"Heaven knows I dislike to tell you, dear one," he said to me that night as we were alone in the parlor, "but I cannot carry on this search any longer, for I am a poor man, as it behooves every minister of the gospel to be, and besides I must go. Must I go alone, Olive?"

"Oh, I cannot leave here now," I answered. "It would seem like deserting Ulrica."

"I know, dear," he pleaded, "but what can we do without money? I will go home and borrow the necessary funds to employ an experienced detective, and, if possible, our sister shall soon be found."

There was surely logic in his pleadings, and when I remembered all his unselfishness, how he had shared my sorrow and the tireless love he had shown for me and mine, I could not say him nay.

CHAPTER IV.

“Life is full of broken measures,
Objects unattained;
Sorrows intertwined with pleasures,
Losses of our costliest treasures,
Ere the heights be gained.”

A few days later we were quietly married in the church we had both attended. As our friends crowded around us with their kind congratulations, I shed tears half of joy and half of sorrow. I missed so sorely the sight of my sister's face. Her dear presence was all that was wanting to make me the happiest woman in existence. I think a little corner of heaven finds its way to earth when two hearts are wedded for all time and during all the years of my wedded life I found no flaw in the character of my husband. Perhaps love blinded me to his faults; but if so, it is sweet to be thus blinded.

What mattered it, that I performed the most menial tasks in our little house? I swept and dusted, washed up floors and cooked and was overjoyed to do these things for his dear sake, for he ever remained a poor man as was compatible with his calling.

Four weeks we had been in that beautiful southern city of Richmond when Ernest came home one evening and laid an open letter in my hand. “Read it dear wife,” he said, “and thank God that our sister is safe.” And I did thank God most fervently. The letter was from Mrs. Mason and ran thus:

N. Y. City, Feb. 21st, 18—.

Dear Mrs. Blackburn:—

I am pleased to inform you that your sister was here today with her husband. It was a great surprise to me when she came rushing into the hall, all aglow with the thought of seeing you, and she was terribly disappointed by your absence. They were in quite a hurry to catch a train, so she had no time to write today, but requested me to do so. She did not explain her long absence to me. I hope she is all right and happy, though her husband seems a trifle old and gloomy for one like her. He is a farmer and their address is Hampton, N. Y. She promised to visit me occasionally, as her home is not far from the city. So I hope to see you and your husband also when you visit her. I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Fanny Mason."

To say that I was surprised would but faintly express my feelings. My little sister a wife! It was all so sudden that I instinctively felt that love had not led her into this marriage. It was with anxious heart and forebodings that I waited for that promised letter which reached me three days later and partly assured me of her welfare. However, I could not shake off the belief that she had been forced into marriage in some unaccountable manner.

I could never be entirely happy away from my darling, although I knew myself unreasonable in expecting to keep ever at her side through life. That longed-for letter was as follows:

Hampton, N. Y., Feb. 24, 18—

My dear, dear sister:—

At last I have the opportunity to write you. I have so longed to send you some tidings of myself knowing how you must have been harassed with fears as to my welfare. How strange it seems to tell you that I am a wife, and hope to be a very happy one. It was very unexpected and sudden and I have scarcely had time to realize my position.

You see, dear, it was this way. That dreadful day when I last saw you, I was scarcely out of your sight when a couple of rough looking men appeared and picking me up bodily placed me in a covered wagon, preventing my screams by binding a cloth across my mouth. They drove directly to Mrs. Durkin's house, which is in the suburbs. You may have surmised that she was the cause of my disappearance. Well, many things happened which I cannot explain on paper. Mark, that is my husband's name, rescued me from her. When I see you I will explain more fully. You must come to me as soon as Ernest can spare you. You must have no anxiety for me. I suppose we are much better placed in life that we were when together, but, Oh, dear sister, I do miss you. To know that those delightful days can come no more saddens me—but never mind. Mark is quite well to do. We have a large farm three miles from Hampton station and everything seems very lovely and strange to me. I am quite busy arranging my household now. Tell me all about your daily life and I want my dear

brother Ernest to write me. You know how highly I regard him.

I send to you both my best love,

“Your sister,

Ulrica Warren.”

P. S.—That poor girl that was ill, did she miss me, Olive?”

Alas, I had not gone near the poor girl and it shamed me to confess my thoughtlessness. I folded the letter and laid it away, but I was far from being satisfied and felt almost assured that all was not well with her. Why had she been so anxious to impress upon me the fact that she was content? She did not say that she was happy, but that she hoped to be. Where was the warm praise of the newly made husband which should fall spontaneously from a loving wife's lips? So it was that the main circumstances which led to her marriage remained a mystery to me. But I strove to lay aside my misgivings and in this was assisted by Ernest who assured me he found nothing in the contents of her letter that hinted of disappointment.

And I being so supremely happy in my own sunshiny corner in life, found it hard indeed to entertain an idea of an opposite state of affairs existing for any one. For me life was one long day dream of joy; and as the days, weeks and months-trod on each other's heels in joyous swiftness, a year passed ere I realized that half of it had sped away. Still I had not seen my sister. Her husband and his family were yet strangers to me. Into her letters had crept a

perceptible tone of weariness with scarcely a word of Mark, and she no longer urged me to visit her. So blinded was I by the dazzling brightness of my own happiness that I made no effort to go and see if all was really well with her. One day a letter came informing me that there had come a wee small stranger into her household. Then the last doubt of her happiness fell away from me. I knew how great was her love for little children, and felt that her heart and life would henceforth be full.

Six years thus hurried into the past and not even yet had I looked again upon my sister's face. I have often wondered since, that I had never gone to her, that we, who had been so near and dear, should allow so many years to intervene between our meeting. But so it was. I with the manifold duties of a pastor's wife, which only those so situated can realize, had delayed the intended visit from time to time. She had never mentioned coming to me after her first few letters.

Oh, how little I dreamed of the sad circumstances which would cause me to make that long deferred visit.

One evening in the early Springtime, I was tidying the parlor for the homecoming of Ernest, my thoughts occupied with my sister and her child. Soon an unaccountable restlessness took possession of me and increased as the moments passed. How plainly I can see even yet the lengthening shadows creeping, creeping like things of evil to my very door. When the sun suddenly sank behind a dark, low lying cloud,

I stood as one transfixed. I strove to shake off my fear and laughed uneasily.

"How foolish I am," I said aloud, and was startled so strangely did my voice sound. Yet I stood and watched the light fading from the sky till all grew misty and chill. Oh, it was the last sunset I watched for many a day. I went indoors and lighted the lamp and glanced at the clock, wondering at Ernest being so late in coming. But still the clock ticked another hour away, ere I heard the front gate open and close as some one came hurriedly up the walk.

Opening the door I found one of my friends, Mrs. Hatton confronting me. I saw that in her white face, which told me that something was wrong. I would have no parleying, but grasped her arm and demanded to know at once what it was. I heard her words as the knell of doom. Ernest had suddenly been killed in a railway accident as he was returning home from a neighboring parish where he had gone to deliver a sermon. In my bitter anguish I cried out that God had forsaken me. Then a dense darkness closed round me and I knew no more.

Oh, say not that two souls woven together by such endearing ties and sweet companionship, can thus be rudely torn asunder and not feel the strain, even though the width of the world divide them and no mortal tongue tells the tale. When I regained consciousness, they told me, I had been battling against death four weary weeks. How strangely dark and void my life seemed as the knowledge of my loss rushed to mind with overwhelming force. How the words of my dying mother rang in my ears at that

moment. 'My child, always bow to the will of God. Kiss the rod that smites you.' My thoughts flew to my sister, surely she was with me at such a time. My love for her began to glow in my breast, doubling and redoubling now that she was all I had. I called her name faintly, but only kind Mrs. Hatton came.

"You must be quiet, Mrs. Blackburn," she said. "I telegraphed immediately for your sister and received word that she could not come."

"I must see the letter," I cried.

My sister had not penned it.

"Write and tell my sister that I am recovering and will be with her as soon as I can travel," I said.

Mrs. Hatton did as I requested. Oh, how I longed to fly to my sister, that she might explain away her seeming desertion of me in my time of sore distress.

My recovery was rapid, for the desire to see her and the child imbued me with new strength. So one month later I bade farewell for a time to my little home, out of which the sunlight seemed to have fled forever more. I had yet another spot to bid farewell and my heart almost failed me as I first looked upon that low green mound which hid by beloved from my longing view. Kindly hands had laid him down to rest beneath the sighing southern pines and I in my delirious illness, had never beheld his dead face. And it was well for my memory of him in all the glow of health and life and happiness was far sweeter. I kneeled there in the morning sunlight and sought to kiss the rod even as my dead mother had told me, even as I knew he would wish me to do. But not yet was it possible for my rebellious heart to sub-

mit, though I knew it would be sweet to fall prostrate at the feet of God, taking weal or woe from his hand and still smile and say, 'Thy will be done.'

Two days later I reached Hampton, N. Y., and a desolate place it was indeed. A few straggling cottages stood near the small depot. A solitary farm wagon devoid of occupants was standing along side the bare platform on which I had been deposited with my baggage. I looked about me helplessly. I had pictured all through my journey my sister's lovely, sympathetic face which would be there to meet me. But no such sight greeted my eyes. Presently a stolid, heavy-browed, middle-aged farmer came leisurely across the street and eyeing me in the same manner apparently without the least interest, inquired if I was Mrs. Blackburn.

"I am," I answered. "Were you sent to meet me?"

"Yes, I am Mark Warren," he answered stiffly.

So great was my surprise that I could form no suitable words of greeting. There was no kindly light in his eyes, no brotherly friendliness in his voice; and when he affected not to see the hand I at length found courage to offer him, I was chilled to the heart. When I thought of how Ernest would have greeted my sister had she been so situated, of the loving hand clasp, the sympathizing words of consolation, the tender brotherly kiss she would have received, and which I missed even from this country boor, I kept back my tears with an effort. Without further words he put my luggage into the nearby wagon, and invited me to follow as best I could.

My fears that my sister had been forced into this

marriage became certainties now that I had seen her life companion. I pondered deeply during that ride, seeking to solve the intricate problem of why she had joined her fair young life to one who must be incongenial in every respect. Why he did not even practice the common civilities of life and was silent and repelling. Nothing could I draw from him save monosyllables in answer to my questions of my sister and her child. As we turned a corner suddenly and found a roadside bordered in lavish profusion by wild roses, interspersed with clinging vines of the morning glory whose many hued, starry eyes had not yet been blinded by the early morning sunshine, I involuntarily exclaimed, "How beautiful."

"Troublesome weeds," he said, contemptuously. .

Evidently the beauties of nature had no charms for him. I understood his narrow warped nature from that hour and never have I had cause to change my first convictions.

And my sister, how can I describe our mutual joy at again being united or how can I describe the unutterable woe in her white face, the deadly chill that had fallen like a blight over her bright spirit. My searching eyes read at a glance her unhappiness, which she strove to hide with her old time smile. A burning light which almost amounted to a horror, dwelt in her eyes which no smile could chase away. What slow torture had been at work these many past years bringing about this change in my darling's one-time sunny face.

Almost her first words were, "Why did not Ernest come with you?"

I gazed at her, too shocked to speak, and felt the blood leaving my face. I could only point to my crape-trimmed gown.

"I do not understand," she said in a puzzled tone, coming nearer me.

"Surely you know," I found voice to say. "My darling, I am widowed."

Putting loving arms around me, she cried, "Oh, Olive, and you have been alone through it all. Why did you not send for me? No one under the sun should have kept me from you."

"You were sent for, dear," I answered, "but Mark wrote that you could not come." She said nothing and I cried, no longer able to repress my tears. "Oh, Ulrica, for what purpose did he keep this from you?"

"I can tell you myself," came a gruff voice, as Mark stepped into the room. "I knew she'd be bawling around and I hate such nonsense; besides she could waste neither time nor money on such a useless trip as you proposed."

Without more words he glanced at the clock and went about his work. Thus was the greatest sorrow of my life disposed of by the man whom the law had made my brother. Oh, it was almost unbearable, it was indeed!

At that moment a little tot made her appearance at the door, a little tot with bonnie blue eyes and tangled, sunshiny curls. But she had not the soft, sweet expression of her mother, for her whole make-up plainly showed that she was combative to a degree.

"I am Aunt Olive," I said, taking her in my arms

and kissing the tiny face. My sister soon left us in order to attend to her household duties, and whilst little Dorothy eyed me with round, curious orbs, I took a mental inventory of my surroundings. Evidently the room I occupied served as a parlor and spare bedroom, for in one corner stood an old-fashioned four-posted bedstead; some stool chairs, a small uncovered stand table, plain muslin blinds stretched across the narrow windows completed the furnishings. The floor was bare, not even a rug to break the severity of its outlines. Not a book, not a picture, not even a trailing vine was there to give life and color to the cheerless apartment. I marveled more and more as I mentally compared it to the small room my sister and I had occupied when together, how she brightened it with the little creations which her hands had wrought, making it a veritable work of art. Dorothy's childish prattle demanded my attention and soon I asked her to show me mamma's flowers.

"She hasn't any," said the child. "Papa don't like them, and her digs them up when mamma plants them."

"Of whom are you speaking, Dorothy?" I asked in surprise.

"Why just an old woman that comes here," was the answer.

"But what is her name," I persisted.

"Just her," she declared, looking at me defiantly. "Papa tries to make me call her auntie, but I won't. She makes mamma cry and I hate her." This with flashing eyes. "I'll call you auntie, though," she said

complacently, "because you're pretty. I like pretty people, they're good; but ugly ones are bad ones."

I was silent from sheer amazement. What dreadful influence had been brought to bear upon the child causing her to form such opinions? Eyeing me sharply for a few moments she said: "I wish mamma had a nice dress like yours. You must be awful rich. Have you any old one you could let her have?"

"Why child," I exclaimed. "No doubt mamma has many dresses nicer than mine."

"No, she hasn't," said the little one quickly. "She put on the best one she's got because you was coming. Her said it was too fine for anything only to wear to meeting."

The child prattled on, but I scarcely heard more, for I was lost in thought. I remembered that my sister was wearing a plain gingham house dress, neat and tasty, but cheap. On every side were evidence of pinching poverty, and yet my sister had written me that Mark was well to do.

"Who helps mamma do the work?" I asked presently.

"I do," answered the little one, proudly. "And her comes and helps sometimes, but I say her just bounces around and scolds and tells how to do things."

Of what, indeed, was my sister thinking when she permitted any one to dictate to her about her household arrangements. Alas, when I made the acquaintance of her, I wondered no more.

CHAPTER V.

ONE DAY.

“We are better for the longing,
Stronger for the pain,
Souls at ease are Nature wronging;
Through the harrowed soil come thronging,
Seeds in sun and rain.”

I assisted Ulrica in preparing the noon day meal and attempted to make myself agreeable striving to throw off the weight of disappointment that was tugging at my heart so heavily. Mark and three hired men came in with a clatter of heavy boots on the bare floor of the stuffy little kitchen and without a word took their places at the table. No attempt at conversation was made. Even the every day courtesies of life were omitted. Ulrica waited on them with toil hardened hands as silent as they; her lagging step and white face telling the tale of utter weariness of both body and mind. “No doubt she has been doing this all these six long years,” I thought, my anger rising.

I looked at the thin, wasted form, which had never rounded out and developed into magnificent womanhood such as I knew must have been had the proper conditions existed. My anger grew apace as I mentally exclaimed, “What right has this man to make a slave of her? What right has she to wear out her bright young life in this manner? Her life that was so full of hope and great possibilities when I last saw her.

She filling the place of the most ignorant drudging servant! And it all unnecessary as I well knew."

Mark Warren ignored my very presence and it required no great amount of perception to undersatnd that to him I was a most unwelcome guest. And I had come with the expectation of making my home with my sister and her husband. How gladly would Ernest and I have welcomed Ulrica and her child to our home had she been situated as was I?

Ulrica was busy all that long heated summer afternoon with little odds and ends of tasks that only a farmer's wife can find to do. I asked Dorothy if mamma ever stopped working. "Oh, no; she can't," was the answer. "Papa says her keeps everything going in her house and mamma can too."

The child was full of reminiscences of her and she prattled on in her quaint way until Ulrica gently chided her, saying, "You must not speak so of Aunt Martha."

"But she's not my aunt; I hate her," was the quick retort.

Ulrica looked at the resentful little face with a great pain in her own eyes, but she did not chide the child more.

At length the busy day was done and I kept Dorothy with me that night. With her childish chatter she disclosed the secret of my sister's unhappy existence more fully than did she herself in all the after years. But great was my joy when that little white-robed creature kneeled by the bedside and offered up her evening prayer. Who but her mother had taught her this? "Does mamma do so?" I asked in trembling tones.

"No, and I don't want to do it, but I'm afraid not to," came the answer straight.

"Why are you afraid, Dorothy?" I asked.

"Because papa is always telling me what dreadful things God will do to me if I don't pray and be good. Oh, God must be awful wicked," she said, in an awe-struck whisper.

Horried, I asked: "What does mamma say?"

"She tells me to be good because I love God and not because I'm afraid of Him; that God is not a great big man, but he is just love, love! Oh, you ought to see mamma's face when she tells me that!" exclaimed the little one, her own face all alight. "I do try to love God that way too," she exclaimed, while a shadow blotted out all the light in the shining eyes, "but then I can't; I'm too afraid. Anyway, I love my mamma best," she concluded, laying her drowsy little head on the pillow.

"Is it after all a mistake to teach the fear of God before love is enthroned in the hearts of little children?" I asked myself. At least it was so in this case. My heart was indeed heavy that night.

The following morning I arose with the intention of taking a walk in the gloriously beautiful sunshine. How out of keeping was the gloomy apartment I occupied with the beauty of that summer morn. The four walls kept out all the brightness and I made haste to escape its depressing atmosphere. As I stepped out into the bare front yard I saw Ulrica coming up a side path carrying in either hand a heavy pail of foaming milk. I gave up the walk I had promised myself and repaired to the kitchen. She turned to me with a smile, but all her forced smiles could not deceive me into the belief that she was content. After she had strained and

put away the milk she said: "Come, Olive, sit here and let me give you some breakfast; you must excuse us for not waiting. We are early risers, for there is so much morning work to do on a farm."

We had promised ourselves that we would pass the day in the woods, and Ulrica busied herself with preparing a lunch for the occasion.

"Mark has gone to his sister's and we shall be alone," she said in such a tone of relief that I looked up quickly. Before I could say anything, however, in bounded Dorothy, who had just awakened.

"Oh, mamma, mamma!" she screamed, "her is coming and papa too. We can't go now. Let's hide and maybe she'll go back home! I hate her, I hate her! The old——"

"Dorothy, hush," commanded Ulrica, but there was a look of keen disappointment on her own features. Evidently a day in the woods was a rare pleasure to them both.

Presently we heard heavy steps on the walk and an elderly female made her appearance at the kitchen door. She was clad in a faded calico gown, barely reaching her shoe tops, while a black sunbonnet that might have seen twenty years of service was set well over a face which for harshness of outline and traces of ill temper it would be most difficult to find a match. Heavy thick soled shoes such as farm hands might wear while following the plow added to the uncouthness of her appearance. Without paying the least attention to me, she raised her bony hands in horror, crying out in a rasping voice:

"Why, Ricky, I declare to goodness your work ain't

done up yet. Here I've come five mile this mornin' after doin' all mine and churnin' besides. Sich triffliness I never hearn of. It's enough to drain any man's pocketbook. It's dredful to think on, to what a pass poor John Markus'll come yet."

As she took a breathing spell Ulrica looked at her bravely and said: "Why, Martha, it is not late yet, and——"

"You need'nt make excuses to me," she interrupted, angrily. "I say it's a sin to waste precious time, and the Lord says so too."

"But this is the Sabbath, Martha," expostulated Ulrica, "and as the men do not go to the fields, there is no occasion for such early rising."

"Well," answered the exasperating creature, "you'd better be a readin' your Bible 'stead of lollin' 'round of a Sabbath mornin'."

"Who have we here, I'd like to know," she said abruptly, as if just discovering my presence. "I s'nose you think I'm not a fit person to be made acquainted with your fine friends."

"Martha, you know better; you did not give me time," said Ulrica, her face flushing painfully.

"This is my sister, Olive, of whom I have spoken so many times."

I bowed distantly. She drew her eyeglasses from the folds of her gown and after adjusting them on her nose to her satisfaction, surveyed me critically from head to foot.

"Well, I must say, she be a heap more sensibler lookin' than you air, Ricky," she said, curtly. "I never could endure such a faded, washed-out look as you've

got. If you'd take your hoe and git out in the fields like I do, you'd git some color in your face. You had a plenty when you first come here. It might a been that you had to work some afore John Markus got you. I must say he got fooled nice when he took you in."

Ulrica made no reply to the insulting remarks, though I could scarce refrain from doing so in her behalf.

"Well, I'll not waste another minute standin' here," presently declared Martha. "I'm agoin' to look over the place an' see what's agoin' to waste."

She stalked out to the garden. Knowing that it was useless to make a pretense of not understanding my sister's domestic trials, I asked abruptly, "Has it been so all these years, Ulrica?"

"Yes," she answered, quietly.

She saw my pitying look and said, "No, Olive; I am scarcely deserving pity," while that burning light in her eyes flamed anew.

"What can you mean?" I said in astonishment.

"I do not deserve pity because I am so fallen," she cried, such pain in her voice that I had not the heart to ask an explanation, for her words mystified me not a little. She had not yet given me the history of her escape from Mrs. Durkin, and I felt a little hurt that she had not done so at the first opportunity.

I turned away in search of Dorothy, but she was nowhere visible. At length I found her tucked securely out of sight in the bedroom closet.

"Auntie," called a small voice cautiously, "is her gone?" I caught the little pet in my arms. "Why, darling, are you afraid of her?" I asked, soothingly.

"No, I am not," was the surprising answer, "but I do hate to look at her. I cracked her over the head with the broom once and she made for me, but mamma stepped up and looked at her hard, oh, so hard, and that old woman opened her mouth and gapped just like I've seen the fishes do when they are out of water."

"Oh, Dorothy, how dreadful," I cried, aghast.

"Well, she called my mamma a lazy hussy, so I just pooped her one," said this small protector, proudly, her eyes flashing.

This was by far a worse state of affairs than I had deemed possible. What an atmosphere for a child to grow up in—especially this child, who had inherited the combatative spirit of her father to such a marked degree.

My meditations were terminated abruptly as a rasping voice cried angrily: "Now, Ricky, there you stand. I want you to start up that fire, and git a pail and come out here. These blueberries air agoin' to waste. They've got to be canned afore dinner. A nice idea it be, too," she goes on, "that I've got to come over here on a Sabbath mornin' and go to work and save John Markuses garden stuff. A nice name you'll have if it gits to be known in the neighborhood." As an after-thought she added: "Tell that Miss Olive to come along and help us."

"Oh, no, Martha, she need not come," said Ulrica, quickly. "Why not, pray?" came the snappish retort. "Is she too good to work? It's high time sich critters was showed that they couldn't go 'round spongin' on folks and gittin' waited on."

"Oh, do please hush, Martha, she will hear you," said Ulrica, pleadingly.

"Spouse I care?" she retorted. "Fur my part, I don't see how John Markus is ever agoin' to put up with so much company. Now this makes three different ones that has come to see you in the last two year, but, thanks to me, the other two didn't stay long.

"If you won't ask that sister of your'n to work, I'll do it, and mighty quick, too," she declared, as she stalked to the middle door. "Here, Miss Ol, lend us a hand. There's lots to do here. We're poor folks an' can't loll 'round." Her tone and manner were most insulting. Utterly ignoring her, I went up to Ulrica and said: "Dear, I would not tire myself out with such work this lovely morning. To-morrow will answer just as well."

Before she could reply the old harridan was upon us, fairly screaming in her impotent rage.

"How dare you uphold her in her laziness. You air a triflin' hussy, an' so is she. What did the 'onery thing have when John Markus took her in, I'd like to know. Oh, that I should ever see this day with poor John Markus so fooled and well nigh broke up."

She had worked herself into a perfect frenzy by this time, and I looked at her in dismay. Never did I so long to take instant flight from any spot.

"Oh, Martha, desist, I beg you," cried Ulrica.

At that moment Dorothy, but partly dressed, passed the open door, chasing her kitten.

"Mercy, look at that shameless child," cried Martha, raising both hands in horror. "You nasty little critter, shame on you; go git your clothes on this minit.

When I was your age I wouldn't let nobody see me 'thout my dress on."

"You'd better make me," was the pert reply, and with a sly smile Dorothy ran to me and held to my skirts. Martha's sharp eyes were aglitter with rage, but she made no attempt to rebuke the child. Presently I followed Martha and Ulrica to the garden. Oh, how I longed to take my sister's place in that household just long enough to have one battle with that domineering, hard-visaged creature.

When I found myself alone with Ulrica during the afternoon, I asked her why she did not show some spirit.

"I could never stoop to quarrel with anyone, Olive," she answered, a strange, proud light in her eyes.

"From whence do you draw your stock of patience, Ulrica?" I asked, a little testily, for it angered me to see her so imposed upon.

"From my eternal hope," she answered, softly. The radiant light that suddenly illuminated her face, together with those words, silenced me.

A little later, as she was arranging her beautiful wavy hair, Martha said, disagreeably: "Foolin' again, Ricky, with that frowsy head of yourn. Why can't you comb your hair smooth like mine, as a decent woman out to do?"

And with such remarks, always insulting, directed toward one or the other of us, the narrow-souled creature passed the time away. To all Ulrica returned a soft answer. Dorothy was soundly scolded, and time and again commanded to be quiet, to which the child paid not the least attention. How sweet the sound of

childish laughter and the patter of little feet seemed to me, who had so longed to hear them in my own childless home.

How I longed that day for Martha to leave us, but such was not her intention, as she informed us that she meant to stay till John Markus came home if it was midnight, an' tell him just how things was agoin' on. "It's my duty to do it, as a Christian woman," she declared. Mark had gone away long before the noon hour and was not expected back until late.

An unfortunate, or shall I say fortunate, oversight of Ulrica's brought matters to a crisis that night. She had neglected to lock her trunk, as usual, and Martha, prying through the house, did not permit its contents to escape her busy fingers. Ulrica had just finished her evening work in the kitchen and stepped into the adjoining room, when Martha held up to our view a panel picture on which was painted the loveliest cluster of blood red roses imaginable, a dainty Cupid poised among them, ready to send his dart of love straight at the centermost one. It was exquisitely wrought, all finished save the shading of one rose. Martha's face was a sight to behold as she looked at Ulrica and fairly hissing out the words: "You onrespectable hussy, a wastin' of time an' money a paintin' naked young ones. Decent folks don't have the like of this in their houses, tho' they may in the kind you come from. You low, fallen critter, do you 'spose I don't know what kind of a place John Markus took you from?" Fairly choking with rage, she tore the canvas through the center and trampled the fragments under foot.

Ulrica sprang forward with face so white, with such

a terrible flame of anger in her great black eyes that I was alarmed and could only stand and stare at her. I had never seen my sister angry before. It was a revelation to me, for it was as though long pent up hatred had concentrated into one mighty force and now threatened to burst forth, bringing devastation, ruin, and even death to the object against which it was directed. As I still gazed, fascinated, horrified, she paused and stood quite still and fought with that demon of rage. Oh, it was a desperate struggle, for even I felt the wrenching strain of it with a keen pain. Then I saw the anger gradually die out of her eyes, and a look of triumph take its place—a triumph so great, so glad, so holy, that I marveled still more. She looked up for one brief moment, and when her eyes again rested on Martha there was a great pity showing in their luminous depths. When she spoke her voice was soft with infinite pity as she said:

“Poor, benighted, ignorant creature, I pity you, Martha,” softly these words of the blessed Saviour came to me as I looked upon her face: “Verily, he that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city.”

Meanwhile Martha had stood open-mouthed and silent. I even detected a swift look of fear in her glittering eyes. Mark returned at this moment in time to hear Ulrica’s words, and oh, shame that I should tell it, stepped up quickly and gave her a stinging blow on the fair cheek.

“How dare you call my sister ignorant?” he said, cruelly. Ulrica looked at him for a moment, her face all aquiver with an expression I could not define, and then turning to me, cried: “Oh, Olive, I am so glad, so

glad." And she hid her face on my shoulder to conceal the tears which I knew for some reasons were happy ones.

"I am going down to old man Herman's to make that sale and may not be back till to-morrow," next said Mark, gruffly.

Without further words he and Martha went out together, she giving Ulrica a malignant glance as she passed us. Aye, poor benighted creature indeed.

CHAPTER VI

FLIGHT.

“We journey through lowland shadows,
Through the dull, dull mist and the rain;
Oh, chilling the fog of the marshes
And the winds from the lonely plain.”

* * * * *

“But a something speaks within us,
‘Look away from the spade and the clod,
O Soul, look up for thy birthright,
And away to the hills of God.’”

I was dumb with amazement at the unaccountable manner in which Ulrica received the debasing insult. Still more was I mystified as I looked upon her face, for it was radiant as with a new-found joy. There was a glad ring in her voice as she cried, “Now that I am free, Olive, it does not shame me to tell you some things.”

“Free from what, Ulrica?” I asked in surprise.

“Free from this horrible bondage which the law calls marriage,” she answered. “A bondage more terrible, more degrading than any boughten slave ever endured. For I truly believe that the worst form of slavery imaginable is to be an unloving wife. That I have been from the first. But at last I have risen triumphant above the petty prejudice which causes one to shrink from the world’s censure; that censure

which falls so heavily and oftentimes so unjustly upon a deserting wife."

"What will you do, Ulrica?" I asked, though fearing her answer.

"I shall leave Mark Warren," she answered firmly. For one wild moment I longed to uphold her in her determination to desert her husband. But I put the thought from me, for, however heavy the cross, she must bear it if she would win the crown.

"No, no, Ulrica," I expostulated. "Anything but that. You must endure to the end."

"Nay, Olive," she answered. "You are altogether wrong, and your views are indeed narrow and contracted upon this subject, this most important subject in woman's life. Even you, Olive, believe that the human body is the temple of the living God, yet you would defile it because the law made by man sanctions relations which are hallowed alone by love, a love which no man's law can enforce. In fact, Olive, she added, "I shrink from marriage and all it implies, with deepest loathing."

Again that look of horror grew in her eyes as she cried wildly: "Oh, if you could but know how I have degraded both body and soul for a mistaken idea, the false idea that it were better to be called wife than—something else. Listen to me, Olive," she continued, "while I tell you the story of my fall."

"You see I was sold into slavery, for Mark Warren bought me, yes, bought me from Mrs. Durkin. Amongst all the bidders he paid the highest price, and I in a weak moment, thought it best to become his wife. I was in his power and completely helpless.

When the opportunity to save my honor (in the eyes of the world) was offered me, I grasped it and—fell. Oh, who can know to what depths of degradation.” She covered her white face with trembling hands, completely overcome by bitter reflections.

“But you did right, Ulrica,” I cried, “quite right.”

“No, a thousand times no,” she exclaimed bitterly. “Had I chosen the alternative, I should have known myself blameless. I should have known that it was circumstances alone which had mastered the flesh, but could not master the spirit.”

“Listen, let me tell it all,” she said, as I was about to interrupt her. “When the time arrived that I might have received help, I was too weak to ask for it. My promise was already given, and rather than break that promise, Oh, foolish idea of honor, I deliberately gave myself to this man from whom, as a husband, I shrank with a frightful loathing. Even then had I been brave enough to cast off this yoke of bondage at the first opportunity, I might have still held myself almost spotless. But, no, I have permitted this horror to drag me down, day after day, for six long years, knowing that I was sinning against myself and my God. Think, too, she went on, of the years in which my labor might have enlightened the woes of poverty for some poor person. Six long years have I been laboring in vain, for Mark Warren had rather see his hoarded wealth go up in smoke than use ever so small a portion to aid a fellow creature.”

“Yes,” she added, “six long years have passed away, in which I have made no progress, but instead

have fallen backward, backward, always backward. Oh, the thought is maddening."

I was mute before the unutterable pain in her white face and the shrinking horror in her eyes as she turned them upon me. My own marriage had been such a happy one, I was incapable of realizing, except dimly, her position, but even with that dimness of realization, I shuddered inwardly.

"Olive," she presently continued, "with that blow he gave me tonight were broken the fetters that bound me. With that blow I seemed to wake to the full knowledge of my life's duties; those duties do not lie beneath his roof."

But the old prejudices still weighed heavily upon me, and I cried: "Ulrica, I cannot bear to think of you as a runaway wife. Is there no alternative?"

"None," she answered firmly. I went to her, and taking both her hands said earnestly, "I cannot give my consent to this step you are contemplating, although I know your position is a terrible one at present, but—"

"Then we will speak of it no more tonight," she interrupted, placing her hands on my lips playfully.

So she left me. I mused long upon the occurrences of the day, and my pillow was besprinkled plenteously with tears ere I slept. Bitter indeed were my reflections, though I but partly realized what my poor sister's life had been during those long weary years. Well I knew there was but one remedy and to me that seemed a terrible one. Though now, after the lapse of many years, I am convinced that my views were indeed narrow and contracted.

I was awakened the following morning at daybreak by the sound of heavy footsteps in the kitchen. I made my toilet hastily, intending to assist Ulrica with the morning work. As I stepped to the door, I spied a sheet of note paper, which had evidently been slipped beneath, and picking it up read:

"Olive, dear, forgive me for leaving you in this manner but I know you will not willingly go with me tonight; so Dorothy and I go alone. I will communicate with you soon, knowing that you will return to your home in Richmond. In haste, lovingly, Ulrica."

To say that I was shocked would but faintly express my feelings. Not for a moment had I entertained the idea that she would act so promptly. I had planned to use my influence to the utmost limit toward reconciling her to her lot, and perhaps even bringing Mark to view matters in a different light.

Yet as I stepped into the bare, cheerless kitchen and thought of the many weary mornings she had toiled there, a thrill of gladness stirred my heart that she had escaped its dreary confines. I prepared breakfast as best I could for the waiting men; though no questions were asked I knew that they were aware of Ulrica's flight. After the meal was finished, one of the men, James Bradshaw remained. When I looked inquiringly at him he said, "I helped her away, ma'am, she went to your place in Richmond."

"You should not have done so," I said severely. "I fear she has been too hasty in this unfortunate affair. Had I known in time to prevent her she should not have gone, at least not yet."

"That's what she told me, ma'am," he answered,

"but if you'd aknow'n what she's put up with from Mark Warren and that she—devil of a sister of his'n you'd a made her go yourself."

"The likes of him aint fittin for her, no way. He's a hard man, and she'd best keep out of his way, for there's no tellin what he might do," he concluded, shaking his head ruefully.

With these most cheering words, James went away to the fields and I was left quite alone.

Near the noon hour I saw both Mark and Martha dismounting at the gate and I braced myself for what was to come. No doubt the latter had returned for the joyous purpose of gloating over my sister's supposed discomfiture of the previous evening. Mark came in and passed me without a word, but failing to find Ulrica in her accustomed place in the kitchen, asked for her.

For answer, I handed him the note she had left me. If ever I saw surprise and consternation written on man's face, I saw it then. But soon these emotions gave place to unholy anger that swayed him, as a hurricane a time-worn oak.

Ignoble creature that he was, he sought to throw the blame which rightfully rested upon himself, upon another. His voice was hoarse with passion as he turned to me with:

"You are to blame for this; you have persuaded her into taking this step. You'll rue it and so shall she."

Coming menacingly toward me with uplifted hand, as if registering a vow on high, he cried: "Look you

here, and learn that I am no man to be trifled with. She shall return to me or I will take her life."

I saw that in his eye which caused me to shrink away from, from him.

"Sir," I cried at length, my own anger rising at the unjust accusation, "much as I detest you for your unmanly conduct of last night, I would have sought to keep my sister from taking this step, had I known it in time. No words can describe my utter detestation of both you and your sister," I added vehemently, "and it was a most unhappy day for Ulrica when she fell into your power."

Meanwhile Martha had been standing in open-mouthed astonishment, for once speechless. Finding her voice at last, she began to bewail the disgrace which Ulrica had brought upon them.

"I always know'd she'd ruin our good name, John Markus afore you'd done with her. The likes of her wasn't fit to bear an honest name, nohow."

At sound of her voice he turned round sharply and pointed to the door saying: "Curse you, it is you who has caused her to desert me. I see it all now. Never while life lasts dare to enter my door again."

She made no move, no doubt motionless with surprise. He caught her roughly by the arm and pushed her through the doorway. She was in a towering rage as she still stood at the open door, screeching like one demented.

"John Markus, you'll regret this afore the sun sets if you don't take it back. Ask me to come in, I say. Ask me to come in," stamping her foot on the door-sill in ungovernable fury.

For answer he slammed the door in her face. Despite the deplorable situation, I could not restrain a smile of amusement at her utter discomfiture, and no doubt this had increased her anger.

But if Mark Warren thought to be rid of her so easily he was mistaken. Before he had time to utter another word, she bounced into the kitchen and we heard her begin to lay the fire, in order to prepare the noon-day meal. Her loving brother stepped into the room and I followed for I was minded to see this battle to a finish. It was difficult to guess which would be victorious. She had ruled him almost completely for forty years, for they had been orphans at an early age, and I did not believe he could throw off the yoke in a moment's time. He stood and looked at her, all the evil passions of his nature gathering and gaining force. She broke the silence first, saying: "John Markus, you know dinners got to be had, or them men'll lose time an I'm goin' to git it, there now."

I verily believe that had the whole world fallen into space, save that one farm, she would still have deemed it necessary for all hands to labor diligently.

Mark went quite close to her and cried menacingly, "Woman, dare to touch another object that she has had her hands on, and I shall use violence in ejecting you from this house. Now go!"

James was at the door, enjoying this scene immensely, and she appealed to him for protection, which caused him to smile broadly.

"I just won't budge an inch till I've cooked dinner,

John Markus," she made answer and turned again to the stove.

Without more ado Mark gave her a blow on the head and pitched her into the yard saying, "Here, James, drag her off."

I ran to the window and looking out saw James and one of the other men hurrying her out to her horse, whilst she clawed and fought at them madly. The absurdity of the scene, forced a laugh from me and she turned and shook her clenched hand at me menacingly. Was she yet vanquished? Time would tell.

"I wish to return home this evening," I said turning to Mark, but he did not hear me for he sat with his face buried in his hands, the very picture of despair. But I could not pity him when I realized what Ulrica's life must have been with the treatment she had received from these twain. Presently he rose and striding up and down the room said brokenly, "I am ruined, utterly ruined."

It began to dawn upon me that he loved Ulrica in his own fashion, narrow, selfish and miserable fashion though it was. Yet I did not pity him.

"I have it," he exclaimed, stopping in front of me, "I'll take the child and she will follow it, no fear."

"Perhaps she might reconsider her decision if you would agree to make it more pleasant for her and treat her as a wife instead of making a slave of her," I said sharply.

"Why I've treated her right," he said, in angry surprise, "and no one dares say otherwise."

"But you do not understand my sister, "I protested. "It is not her nature to be happy with such surround-

ings. She loves peace. Strife and contention such as is practiced in your household are foreign to her. Besides," I added, "she is not physically able to do the labor of two stout women such as you need here."

"She never complained," he replied doggedly, "and besides, what is a wife good for if she can't keep things up. I can't make an ornament of her. She's perfectly able to do the little work there is here. Work hurts no one. There's my sister, curse her! she is more than twice Ulrica's age and works harder than she ever did."

How utterly incapable he was of realizing the vast depths of Ulrica's nature. He even accused her, though in a mild way, of idleness. She, whose every moment had been so full of helpful toil for others. She who had so often declared that the days were all too short for the accomplishment of her self-imposed tasks.

My anger grew apace as I listened to his words.

"Do you think an oak tree and a tender vine are equal in strength?" I said. "They each have their use in the world. There is just this difference between my sister and yours."

"Bah! What are your vines and blossoms and ornaments good for," he exclaimed contemptuously. "Nothing! Their places had much better be occupied by plain, useful things."

"You are wrong there," I answered. "Do not the most useful vegetables, the most healthful fruit trees, the heaviest grain, first beautify themselves with leaves and blossoms that they may become the more useful in the end? One does not need to make life all

unlovely in order to make it useful. So," I continued, "There are blossoms in the human race capable of gladdening the senses of those possessing the soul to appreciate them. And if the chilling winds and biting frosts from frozen hearts do not blast the tender buds they are capable of bearing the most luscious fruits."

"And so I suppose you think Ulrica is one of these human blossoms," he said laughing deridingly. "Ha, ha! this is something new."

"She is no mate for you," I cried angrily.

"She's not if she don't work and put up with what I can give her," he answered sullenly. "What more could any reasonable woman want than a good home such as she had here," looking around the comfortless room in evident admiration. "Besides," he added, "I think she ought to be thankful to me for taking her as I did, knowing to what she might have come."

So choked with anger was I, that I could not speak, at this allusion to his mean and contemptible conduct in forcing my poor sister into marriage with him. And he had the assurance to speak as if he had done a generous act. Indeed it was the very force of my anger that controlled me, for I stood white, speechless and immovable, bound into silence by a heavy chain whose iron links were hatred and contempt. And Ulrica had passed six long years with perhaps many such insults offered her and still she had never lowered herself by giving way to anger, whilst she had had ten thousand times more provocation than had I. I had passed but two days here and spoken more angry words than I cared to recall.

The power which upheld her must be great indeed, greater than any I had ever known. I did not wonder that she had reached the limit of endurance now that I knew her life partner so well. I decided then and there that I would not insist upon her taking up the ties which were so galling. The best years of her life yet lay before her. Why should her lot not be cast in more pleasant places? She so lovable, so true? I was indeed filled with a great gladness that she had escaped into the sunshine of life once more.

Mark had been silent some time, thinking deeply with a cruel light in his eyes, and suddenly starting up left the house. Hastily springing upon his horse which was still standing at the gate, he turned its head toward the village, when up bobbed Martha from behind a clump of bushes by the roadside. The sudden apparition frightened the animal and caused it to spring to one side so quickly that Mark, unprepared for the move, was thrown violently to the ground. He tried to rise but fell back groaning. As I ran to him he shook his clenched hand at Martha and made a vain effort to reach her.

"Ten thousand curses upon you," he cried, savagely.

James and the other men saw the accident and hurried to the spot. They carried him into the house, for his ankle was found to be so severely fractured that he could not walk a step. A surgeon was sent for and Martha, although truly deploring the accident, stayed. She was the victor for the time being. Despite repeated commands to leave the premises she stayed and cooked the dinner. True it was somewhat

past the usual hour, but it was prepared nevertheless. Mark sulkily refused my proffered services, when I sought to allay the painfulness of his wounded ankle.

"I detest the very sight of you," he cried angrily, and told James to take me to the village as soon as he could make preparations.

It was thus my visit terminated, and little did I dream of how and when I would look upon the face of Mark Warren again.

CHAPTER VII.

“Within the silent rock exist,
A billion yearning lives,
Man is a petty egotist
To think he only strives—
To think he only struggles up
To God, through toil and pain;
He is but one drop in a cup
Filled from the mighty main.

The flowers have tender little souls
That love, repine, aspire
Each star that on its orbit rolls
Feels infinite desire.
The diamond longs to scintillate
When hid beneath the sod.
The universe is animate
With consciousness of God.”

I arrived in Richmond safely, and had scarcely been in my little home an hour when my sister made her appearance. She had engaged rooms near by and awaited my coming.

“Now, Olive,” she cried, “you are angry because I did not ask your advice.”

After returning her kisses I answered, “I was very much put out at first, dear, but before the day was done I knew it was all for the best and I am very glad now.”

I proceeded to narrate the occurrence of the day after her departure. She listened in silence.

"Ulrica, you have no regrets, not one?" I asked, searching her face for some sign of tenderness for the deserted husband.

"Yes," she answered, "I am filled with a terrible regret, for ever must I abhor that part of my life that has been so cruelly wasted. Ever must I carry with me the knowledge that I was deliberately alienating myself from God. For, as I told you before, Olive, my eyes were open to the sin I was committing, but why I remained I can scarcely explain to myself, unless it were that I shrank from again facing the world and also that foolish prejudice I held against the separation of man and wife. It was indeed weak in me, and this regret I feel is my just punishment, so I can cheerfully endure it."

I informed her of Mark Warren's threat that he would take her life if she did not return to him; also that he had employed James Bradshaw to carry little Dorothy back to him, for James had journeyed to Richmond supposedly bent on that errand.

"James will never do it," she declared; "not if Mark Warren should lay all his useless hoarded wealth before him as a gift for the deed. But the threat will be fulfilled, Olive," she added. "It may be but a short time and it may be many years, but it will be fulfilled."

I gazed at her in horror and she smiled a little sadly as she said: "Do not be so alarmed, dear. We must put the evil day as far from us as possible and keep in hiding."

From that moment a terrible fear that Mark Warren

would make good his word fell upon me. James Bradshaw came to us and warned us to beware of him, which but added to the heaviness of my fear. But my sister spoke no more of this man who had constituted himself her judge. James wrote to his employer assuring him that he was but waiting a chance to take the little one from her mother, and so we had ample time to disappear.

I reasoned and to good purpose, as it subsequently proved, that should we but change our residence to some other part of the city we would be more securely hidden. No doubt Mark Warren would look in Richmond but once, and that not thoroughly believing that we had removed to some distant place. Thus he and his hirelings would search the continent over and never look in the right spot. For no doubt he had gold that could flow like water with which to persecute her, but none to make her life more pleasant or to aid a fellow creature in distress. So great was my fear of him that I insisted upon changing our names, but my sister would not.

So it was that I gave up my friends and neighbors, disposed of my cottage and disappeared, retaining nothing connected with those six happy years of my life save the piano which had been the wedding present of the congregation where Ernest was so lately the beloved pastor. We found a small nest-like cottage almost hidden midst the foliage of numerous shade trees, clinging vines and tall flowering shrubs. Truly a beautiful spot in the world's garden where we were secretly veiled from prying eyes, with but the birds and blossoms for companions. We made no acquaint-

tances at first through fear of being traced to our secluded retreat.

As I watched the color come back to my darling's fast rounding cheek and saw the light of happiness and peace resting in her deep eyes once more, I too was almost happy. Scarcely had I a thought that did not in some way include her, and I loved her even as I had, when she was a helpless unhappy child. She insisted upon finding employment as soon as we were fairly settled. Though my income was scarcely sufficient to keep us in comfort, I protested so vigorously against her doing so, for a time at least that she gave way to my wishes. For a few days, a very few days, I had her all to myself. Those few happy days were before the tempter came into our garden of Eden and took the place I occupied in my darling's heart for never was sister's love more true and endearing than ours.

Scarce a fortnight had we been in our new home when we ventured out so merrily one dewey morn to pass a day in the woods. Contentedly I sat and watched my sister and her child as they enjoyed the delights of the summer day together. She had a touch of the Bohemian in her nature which would assert itself at times despite her deep thoughtfulness. Truly it did not lie dormant on that day. A stranger observing her face for the first time would have dreamed it impossible that any sorrow ever cast its shadow over her, so deep was the joyful light in the dreamy eyes, so tender the smile on the sweet curved lips, at one time quieting Dorothy's chatter with a smiling glance and listening to the murmur of the little brook that danced

so joyfully over its rocky bed. At another time pausing to watch the majestic cloud ships sail across the azure sky; at still another time listening to the clear ringing note of a wild bird as it skimmed across the grassy flower bedecked slopes or perched among the fluttering foliage overhead; and yet again running her fingers through the cool velvety grass as though the very touch thrilled her with delight. And when she came swiftly to me with a loving caress and self accusing words saying that she was selfish in her own joy of her blessed freedom, whilst my loss was still so new, I kissed the bright tears of sympathy away ere they could fall assuring her that I was most content and happy.

And at that moment I felt that she had been given me again instead of the lost one and I was indeed almost content. I had her all to myself. The last day that I ever felt she held me dearer than any other save her child, and the events of that day are still as vivid in my memory as though it were but yesterday. I knew that henceforth my life would be but the echo of her own and if any sorrow I had, it must come through her for my life's story had been told and I even fancied that it was so with her, she who yet stood on the very threshold of womanhood, she whose heart had never been awakened by the magic wand of love, that magic wand which touches some so rudely that they scarce can tell if it bring more of joy or more of pain. And so it was that my sister's life all lay before her. All that had been was but as a prelude to what was to be.

Little Dorothy came dancing up to us and with

chubby arms clasping her mother's neck cried, "Oh, mamma, why wasn't we always this happy?"

"Never mind darling, why, but we are to be always happy in the future," her mother assured her, little wotting what that future held in store for herself.

"You speak truly, dear," I said, "We could indeed be very happy if only you were brought into the fear of God. It is one thing wanting to make my peace of mind."

"Whom I fear, I cannot love," she answered quickly, while a deeply thoughtful light kindled in her eyes, she continued, "Fear comes with darkness, and Oh, Olive, I fear naught save the darkness that is in my soul. Yet I feel, I know, that I have passed beyond that childish stage of the soul when fear of punishment holds me back from evil. 'Tis the love alone of the all Good which must pervade one's whole being. 'Tis the love of all All Good which must throw its white light along the way. Fear from an outward source will cast its dark shadow on the way and then our feet grow unsteady and we stumble, we shrink and fall because the light from within which must be kindled by love alone and is not sufficient to brighten the straight and narrow path. Be ye lamps unto yourselves. Believe me, Olive, fear and love do not go hand in hand, save with the weak and immatured mind. Sin must be conquered by love, and not by fear."

"Surely I could not refute any of her statements, and so I listened in silence as she continued.

"Justice must come with wisdom. You believe your heavenly father to be all wise, all merciful and yet on every side are examples of inhuman injustice ac-

according to your conception of His ways. For instance, Olive, if you were blessed with two children and possessed the power to give or withhold every blessing would you give to one a spirit brave to overcome all temptations, give to him the wherewithall to enjoy the comforts of life, give to him the exquisite sensibilities to interpret the grand truths of nature, in fact give him all the powers to live an honorable and virtuous life and then reward him in the life to come for so doing?

"And would you withhold all these blessings from the other, endowing him with evil propensities, a darkened intellect, a will too weak to cope successfully against the demon of passion lurking within him and if he fell then would you condemn him to ever lasting perdition for so doing?

"Oh, Olive," she cried, "God is no such respecter of persons. I should blush with shame did I view my God from your standpoint, or do Him the injustice to believe he rules by such caprice. God rules by law which is the immutable law of nature. Your conception of him is truly a terrible one. Is it for pastime and a desire to see suffering that He creates so many souls, filling them with wickedness and misery, He foreseeing their end, knowing that there is not sufficient strength within them to save themselves?"

"Think too, of the poor, tortured brutes, over which man is given dominion. If they are soulless wherein comes their reward for their sufferings? If death of the body ends all with them, wherein lies the scheme of justice in creation?

"So if justice rules, is there but one solution to

these mysteries, and that it is gradual evolution from the lower to the higher order of life, through many earth lives. As I once told you, in this way only can each be judged according to his deeds, for when he transgresses the great law, the greatness of his punishment is in accordance with the greatness of his crime, and here on this sphere, do we reap as we sow. We see this form of justice carried out in our own comparatively puny laws. Plainly we see the effect of our punishment, then must we know there has been a cause. These causes we have set up by our own acts therefore justice, complete justice is meted out to us. In the woes of terrestrial life do we find retribution for our sins. All souls are sent out to earth to gain the knowledge of good and evil. Freely are we given to eat of the fruit of the tree of life.

“How unjust was God, to reward one with peace that passeth understanding, because he is pure through ignorance of evil, as for instance, when a little child dies, having endured no earthly trials. Compare with its seemingly white soul, a poor besotted wretch who has drunk deeply of the woes of existence, battling unsuccessfully against his evil inclinations. After all, which is the more worthy of the reward of peace? Pure justice demands that each soul be tried by the fires of temptation to an equal degree at some time during its earthly sojourn. This were impossible, should each have but one earth life.

If we are to become one with God we must possess a thorough knowledge of both good and evil. This we acquire by coming in contact with every phase of existence; else how could we discriminate between

good and evil? How could we root out the desires of the flesh which are created by ignorance and purify ourselves into a state of Godliness? God does not require the same thing of the weak and the foolish and the inexperienced, as He does of the strong, the wise and the experienced. Even man does not do that. Is God more unreasonable than man?"

I could find no answer to her questions, but sat shrinking beneath the look of pity she bent upon me as she continued:—

"And yet, with all the injustice of God's rule, according to your conception of Him, you are willing to bow down to and worship Him. Talk about the dark ages, I think the most stygian darkness still exists in many souls. Why, Olive, she cried, "your faith is nothing but a mere prejudice. You are weighed down by fear and preconceived ideas. You believe what you have been taught. You do not seek to solve above the common plane. Without effort we gain nothing of worth either in the spiritual or the material world. Just so long as people are content with such faith, mystery and darkness will be in the soul of man.

"Why have we this restless inquiring spirit if not to find the cause of the objective world about us? Even the tiny lisping child wants to know why this, why that, and is ever seeking knowledge. Why should we reach a certain point and then cease to ponder upon this question as if our stock of wisdom were ever complete in this life, then blindly believe. Why your God does not even set us an example of the commonest humanity. He is so human like, that He becomes angry and yet giving way to anger is ignoble. He is so hu-

man like, that He is revengeful, and yet revenge is also ignoble. He——,” “Oh, my dear, hush,” I cried, “do not question His ways. Remember ‘My ways are not your ways, my thoughts are not your thoughts.’”

“Just so,” she answered, “We must strive for knowledge in order to know His thoughts and ways, for in them is complete justice. But according to your light these words do not convey justice, for will not a loving earthly parent explain the why and wherefore to his child that he may the more readily obey? ’Tis a species of cruel injustice to command one to obey blindly. This begets fear and rebellion which kills love.

I reminded her that many had come to grief by delving into things that were too high.

“No problem is too complicated for the human mind to solve, no object too high for the human mind to attain,” she quickly answered. “In every soul is the inherent quality of God like wisdom, which is slowly, painfully, but surely expanding throughout the ages. It rests with each to shorten this time to diminish this painfulness by casting off the desires of the flesh, and reaching out and up after the loftiest attainments. Knowledge gives us strength, something which no vicarious atonements will ever do. With this strength we can lift ourselves up into the light, we can become purified. Mind must conquer matter to the exclusion of all sin. It takes countless ages to complete this process, to bring these weak ignorant souls to perfection. Remember ‘Work out your own salvation.’”

“Oh, my dear,” I cried, “do you deny the need of repentance?”

"If we do not repent," she answered, "we do not cast off sinful desires, therefore true repentance is absolutely necessary to save us from future sin; but it does not obliterate past sinful acts. How is it possible that you believe your sins can be washed away by repentance when you are told 'as ye sow, so shall ye reap'? We must pay the penalty of pain and sorrow for every sinful thought and act. It is the great and just law of the All Good. Thus do we become our own judges, our own jury. Shall we then condemn ourselves in order to grasp the small and petty joys of earthly triumphs?"

"Ulrica," I said, "it grieves me to hear you deny the teachings of the blessed bible, and—"

"Oh, Olive, I do not deny it's teachings," she answered, "that greatest of all books was written by men possessing wisdom that is almost lost to the world today. They foresaw the painful necessity of depicting God as a revengeful God in order to inspire fear in the minds of the ignorant and lowly, until they so far develop that of their own free will they cast off this fear, and love alone lifts them up to perfection. The low and the ignorant need fear to keep them within the bounds or they would sink again to the level of the brutes, for they have not the moral strength to climb upward unless they fear to fall backward. A small or young mind can conceive of nothing save in an objective sense, hence the personal idea of God. So these minds must have for an ideal a God of superhuman power, against whom their brute force can not prevail. But as the mind expands, so does the conception of God, until we come to recog-

nize His presence in all things, for "God is everywhere." So it was that these great souls who possessed this God-like wisdom, allowed their minds to pervade the whole universe with thoughts of love, and so placed these grand inspiring truths before them in a manner best calculated to uphold humanity in all stages of development. As we gradually develop we come into this light, and so place a different interpretation upon the World. Oh we need a higher conception of God," she cried, "we must have it. We will have it, as we imbibe more of this knowledge."

"Olive," she said suddenly, "have you not secretly questioned the ways of your God in the time of your greatest distress?"

I blushed with shame that it was so, before her questioning glance.

"It is no shame to you that you have done so," she said, "none but the most servile minds can refrain from thus questioning while they hold your views. And never yet have I heard that it calls forth a great amount of goodness or intellect to become a cringing slave."

"O Ulrica," I cried, in dismay, "it is truly great to be an humble servant of the Lord."

"But how much greater to be the equal," she quickly answered.

I was silent from sheer amazement, and seeing the almost terrified expression on my face, she said earnestly. "It is not false pride, Olive, but a worship so great fills my soul, a worship so vast in its reachings, only at rare intervals can my mind comprehend a faint glimmering of its object. But I will know in the

future ages, as I ascend higher and higher, nearer and nearer to this state of perfection. Through each succeeding life, never succumbing to temptation, never giving way to evil. If I am strong enough to trample underfoot all desires of the flesh, each one that is overcome will bring me one step farther up the heights, and speed the time when I shall stand in the presence of my God, my God who is myself. For so it is that each one is himself the object of his search. "Know thyself and all things are known to you."

Her deep eyes were shining with a strange light of hope and worship, greater indeed than I had ever seen in any eyes before. For one wild moment I seemed to comprehend her meaning, and the brightness of that comprehension dazzled me even as the sunlight might the eyes of one long accustomed to stygian darkness.

No wonder she has power to rule her spirit if she stands in that dazzling light, I whispered to myself. However, I put these new and strange thoughts from me, but they left their mark and though I cling desperately to the God of my simple faith yet I am strangely restless, but this restlessness brings me indefinable joy with it.

"But Ulrica," I cried at length, hoping for I knew not what, "we must humble ourselves before God if we love Him."

Not possible was it for me to put away my idea of a personal God.

"Nay," she quickly answered, "great souls strive to become the equals of those they love. Remember, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.'"

Was there aught of egotism about this proud yet humble one? No!

I knew it was quite useless to seek further to change her convictions. They had put grown and strengthened with the years. I knew her to be my superior, both in goodness and intellect. When had I ever heard her say a disparaging word of a fellow creature? All the miseries of her childhood and the still more crushing one of that enforced marriage, had failed to elicit one unkind word of her tormenters. She seemed the very embodiment of love. Love was her creed. Whilst I—ah I scarcely dared compare myself with her, flying as I so often did, into fits of anger, quite unable to govern that most unruly member, the tongue; letting fall some bitter sarcasm which wounded and hardened hearts whose citadels might have been taken by patience and love. True, I repented, with bended knee and tear-wet eyes, yet I have come at last to believe that it is not repentance that lifts us up to God, but self mastery. If my sister's strange religion, so upheld her and led her into the narrow path, what had I to fear? I thus calmed my misgivings which had almost diminished into nothingness. And the future struggles between mind and matter, which she underwent, proved too surely how great was her worship of her intangible God.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Love! It began with a glance,
Grew with the glowing of flowers;
Smiled in a dreamful trance,
Recked not the passage of hours;
Our Passion's flood rose ever,
Flowing for her and me,
Till the brook became a river
And the river became a sea."

"Mamma, do come here," called Dorothy, "there is the sweetest bunch of blossoms on the other side of the brook and I can't get them."

My sister went to do the child's bidding, and put out her hand to pluck the flowers.

"Darling, I cannot reach them without stepping into the water," she said.

"Allow me, little stranger," said a manly voice, while a hand reached out and deftly plucked the coveted blossoms, and the owner of the hand and voice sprang lightly across the little brook and placed them in the child's eager hands. Lifting his hat to my sister, with the grace of a courtier, he gave her a swift glance of admiration as she thanked him for the service. I felt an instinctive dislike creep into my heart for this man, as I saw her eyes droop beneath his gaze and a flush mount her white cheek, a flush such as no man's glance had ever brought there before.

Tall and darkly handsome, he was, with close cropped curls, black as raven's wing, a jetty moustache, shading a mouth whose contour denoted too surely a weak and selfish nature. Selfish even to cruelty. As he stood there, hat in hand, in all the pride and beauty of young manhood, with a winning smile and still more winning words. I mentally pronounced him detestable. He did not turn and go his way, as he should have done, but paused to speak of the music of the woodland songsters, and many things of casual interest did this audacious stranger find to say.

Meanwhile my sister stood in sweet, unstudied grace, red lipped and radiant eyes, listening to his melodious voice, the flush deepening on her cheek, a new shy light gathering in her downcast eyes.

I doubt not that she felt in those first sweet moments of dawning love, yes it was even so, that that small stretch of woodland, with its peaceful sights and sounds was but made for their meeting, that meeting which I even then deplored, that meeting which seemed accidental, but if such meetings are so, life itself is an accident, for from that moment the real story of her life began.

As the stranger still lingered, seemingly with no intention of leaving us, I became indignant and calling, Dorothy prepared to depart.

"Olive," said my sister, "you know I love sunsets we will stay yet awhile."

I made no demur and the stranger stayed and watched the sunset also. And as the evening shad-

ows began to creep about us and little Dorothy declared herself too weary to walk home, he took her in his arms and carried her to our gate, no doubt well pleased at the opportunity of finding our residence so easily.

And yet he lingered, loth to leave my sister without further words. As I turned away a moment in answer to Dorothy's sleepy call, he said, "May I come again?"

I glanced at my sister, quickly, and saw with dismay the flush his words brought to her cheek. He also read her answer, even as I had done, and lifting his hat to us, smilingly walked away.

"Ulrica," I said sharply as she still stood where he had left her, "you should have answered this stranger 'No,' when he requested to call."

She made no reply and I sincerely hoped that we would see him no more. On the morrow she went about, as one in a dream with little dimpling smiles on her lips, with a new light in her eyes, with a new ring in her voice. As great a change had been wrought in her whole being, as one might find in a sun-kissed landscape that had but recently been in deepest shadow. As I read so truly the new joy that had come to her, my own heart grew heavy in proportion, and as the evening drew on apace, and I saw the light of anticipation in her eyes, and the little flushes that came and went on her cheek at thought of his coming, I made one more effort to stem the tide of this new found love. I felt with a terrible foreboding that it would be a disastrous love, that all was not well with this stranger. As the hour grew

later I sent her on an errand, hoping that she would be absent when he called and he would understand it as a tacit agreement that the acquaintance would not be prolonged. Thus I hoped to ward off another meeting between them, poor weak creature that I was. Believing as I did that an all powerful hand governed by divine wisdom, shaped our course in life, yet I sought to completely change my sister's fate, by one small maneuver.

Between sunset and dusk he made his appearance; more handsome and winning was he, if possible, than on the previous day. How strange that I should dislike this man so thoroughly knowing nothing whatever against him. But I could ever discern deceit in any one at once, while my sister could but recognize the good. She believed every one true until they were proven false. Some there are who condemn this as stupidity but if so, it is a blessed fault. I received this man quite coldly, but he chose not to notice my unfriendliness, and even seemed to exert himself to win the good will of myself and little Dorothy. However, the latter had already given him a royal welcome.

After a short time had elapsed and my sister did not appear, he inquired for her.

"She is out," I answered pointedly.

Looking me full in the eye, he smiled and said, "Indeed?"

From that moment my detestation for him increased. I knew that he read at a glance my hostile feelings in regard to the further acquaintance of himself and my sister, and that he defied me to interfere.

As if suddenly remembering that he had as yet omitted to give us his name, he drew forth a visiting card and placed it in my hand. Thereon I read:

"Allen H. Sutherland, M. D."

There was no address, but at the time I scarcely noticed the omission.

At that moment I heard my sister's light footsteps coming through the hallway and when I looked up and saw her enter the room, a flush on her face, that was more beautiful than the western skies at sunset, when I saw that light in her eyes, that light which never yet shone on land or sea; when I saw the shy confusion of her greeting, she who had ever been so self contained, and dignified, I knew that no warning or expostulation of mine could avert harm from this source reaching her; if indeed there was such to come. But it angered me to see her surrender that most priceless treasure, her love, to a perfect stranger, without question or struggle; and still more was I angered and shamed that she did not seek to veil from his sight the unspoken feelings of her heart.

But to one like her, subterfuges were unknown and I verily believe that from the first moment of that meeting she lost herself, as it were, and was as one but half conscious of passing events.

After all, what had I to fear? This man from all appearances, was a gentleman, or what the world called one, and I could form but one palpable excuse for forbidding his attentions to my sister. And when I reminded her later that she was still a wife, she answered: "The law shall free me; myself I do not recognize the tie."

So thus my principal objection was set aside.

This man's story of his past and present, seemed so plausible, so straight forward, his manner so altogether courteous and respectful, his every act and look bespeaking deep regard for her, nay, even more, they bespoke honest love, so the objection that he yet was a stranger, grew to seem a very lame one.

I chided myself for my misgivings. Why should not my darling know the joys of love, she who was so worthy, and why should I, with my strange doubts and fears, cast a shadow over her new found hope? Those thoughts and many more, ran swiftly through my mind, even during that first visit of Dr. Sutherland; and when he rose to take his leave I knew there was a tacit understanding that he was to come again.

Self condemnation has been my daily portion since I first beheld his handsome face. I who loved my sister with no common love permitted this man, with the tender voice and love lit eyes, to make himself supreme in her heart, whilst I observed all and yet used no judgment; for I never inquired from other sources, as to his social standing, or in fact if he had the right to offer her his attentions.

Scarcely a day passed that he did not call at our cottage, and, so the long beautiful summer days were spent by my sister in a dream of bliss. Day by day her love but strengthened and grew upon her. A sweet contentment had found its home in her heart at last. A soft brooding light lay in the still depths of her downcast eyes. Happiness lay quiescent in the very droop of her heavy dark hair and the flush on her rounded cheek was most beautiful to see. No

wild bird's note could express one-half the music in her voice. Ah, truly, the master hand of love had swept the chords of her soul, setting them to sweetest music. Never had the fervent energies of her life been awakened before, and the vista of love had opened to her wondering sight, all the joys of which her deep nature was capable. And as these twain wandered down the flowery length of love's lane, I, myself, was fascinated by the light in my sister's face.

Many were the times that Dorothy would recall me from my day dreams by asking, "Why I smiled so at Mamma? O those past summer days! I seem to feel their sweet mystic spell creeping over me even yet, when long sunny afternoons were spent in some flower bedecked woodland, while the birds sang and the south winds blew softly around us, bearing on its invisible wings the signs of that worse than wasted summer. But my sister heeded them not, for I doubt much if she saw aught in those days, except his face, or heard aught except his voice, and they never seemed to tire of looking into each other's love-lit eyes.

After all they were happy days, days to dream of ever after. When little Dorothy would chase the bright winged butterflies, and the sweet childish laughter would add to the music of the woodland, for soothingly soft came the chirp of the insects as they awakened in the cool of the day, when the sun dipped low in the western sky. All these sounds I seem to hear once more, as I muse on those long dead summer days.

Yet I could not oust from my heart that haunting

dread that all was not well with this stranger. However, I strove to believe that my dislike for him sprang from the fact that he had made himself first in my sister's heart. So I whispered not my doubts in her ears, and her love grew and thrived, with the greater luxuriance, upon his tender words and love speaking glances.

Ofttimes in our wanderings we would tarry on the banks of that most beautiful river James. I would sit a little apart from my sister and Dr. Sutherland, and watch the quivering leaves overhead, making a fret work of light and shadow about them, and as I saw the still joy and peace of her face I was supremely content. She had stepped aside from the turmoil of her past dreary life, and I must leave her undisturbed in her unalloyed bliss.

Could this state of affairs have remained unaltered I should have blessed the one who brought it about. But only for a brief space are any permitted thus to rest by the wayside, for we must soon again shoulder our burdens and struggling, look beyond. Thus it was that, as the summer days drifted by, she sank deeper and deeper into this abyss that lay concealed by love's bright hued blossoms, from her untried feet. She was forgetting all other things that had made her life so full. Indeed, so changed was she that I often marvelled and as I said before, she seemed to have lost herself, the power of self guidance seemed to have deserted her. I grew faint at heart when I thought of the possibility of any rupture taking place in the fulfillment of this great joy of her

life. But hope tarried with me, and gained strength and I came to look upon her happiness as an assured thing.

CHAPTER IX.

"Life's richest cup is loves to fill;
Who drinks if deep the draughts shall be,
Knows all the rapture of the hill,
Blent with the heart-break of the sea.

Ah! drooping wings that trail the ground;
Ah, sudden flights to worlds above;
Ah! thorns that with the roses bound,
About the brows of those who love."

The summer days merged into early autumn when an incident occurred which awoke me to the fact that I too, had been dreaming. We were spending one afternoon in the same woodland where we had first met Dr. Sutherland, who was with us as usual, and he had just plucked a spray of scarlet blossoms, which he was fastening in my sister's shining braids. Turning round on hearing approaching footsteps, the smile on his face suddenly gave place to an expression of startled fear.

The cause of this disturbance was a very surprised looking young man in hunter's garb, with a gun slung across his shoulder. With observant eyes he took in the situation at a glance.

"Why Edward, old fellow, this is a surprise," he exclaimed. "I was not aware of your return to the city."

"I have not been away," answered Dr. Sutherland in an annoyed tone.

"Oh, then you have been in hiding," said the other, with an amused laugh. "This will never do. Where are you stopping?"

Dr. Sutherland hesitated a moment and then named a number and street in a scarcely audible voice, while he was seemingly more and more annoyed. Still he made no mention of our presence.

The young man glanced at my sister, who had moved away a short distance, and was watching little Dorothy in her efforts to build a bridge across the brook that danced over its rocky bed at her feet. I was confident that she did not heed their words, but I had heard and understood their import. As the young man turned again to Dr. Sutherland he gave him a significant glance and smiled. At this Dr. Sutherland's annoyance changed to anger, which his countenance plainly depicted. This but caused the other to smile the more. I knew that something was wrong, very wrong, and I was assured that this man had been deceiving us. Why his friend even addressed him by another name than he had given us.

The young man still smiling said, "I shall expect to see you to-morrow morning, Edward," and lifting his hat as he passed my sister, said some slight words to the child and disappeared amid the undergrowth on the opposite side of the brook.

Dr. Sutherland suddenly glanced at me and a guilty flush overspread his features, as he found me observing him closely. But in another moment he was his

smiling self again. A born dissembler, I told myself with a trembling fear at my heart.

"Who is your friend?" I asked, looking him full in the face.

Returning my look calmly, he answered lightly, "Only a college chum."

"I said no more, but was terribly disturbed. Why should there be any secrecy in his attentions to my sister? Why should he keep his whereabouts unknown to his friends? My eyes began to open to the fact that Dr. Sutherland never proposed taking us where we were likely to meet any acquaintances. Our excursions had always been to some sequestered nook, where none of the city's elite cared to go, and that he was one of them I never doubted from the moment I first beheld him.

"Oh yes, something was terribly wrong, and I was minded to demand a solution of the mystery at once, but when he turned to where my sister was standing, and I saw again the flush that ever leapt to cheek and brow at his approach, the questions which I believed would unmask him died on my lips. However, I decided at once that I would make inquiries on the morrow, in regard to Dr. Sutherland.

And so it was that I held my peace yet awhile, hoping against hope, that all was well. The following morning I went directly to the address which Dr. Sutherland had given his friend, as his place of residence. I found a pretentious boarding house in a fashionable quarter of the city. I was shown the parlor and when the landlady made her appearance I inquired if Dr. Sutherland was in.

She answered in some surprise, "There is no one by that name stopping with me. Dr. Ashley is the only physician among my boarders."

"Perhaps you are acquainted with Dr. Sutherland, madam," I said.

Searching her memory a few moments she replied, "No, I have no recollection of such a person."

I arose to take my leave with what calmness I could command. I was now confident that this man had gone under an assumed name, No doubt this Dr. Ashley was he. As I was passing through the hall I came face to face with the young man whom we had met in the woodland, the previous day. He did not recognize me, and I at once took advantage of the circumstance.

"Excuse me, sir," I said carelessly, "is your friend Dr. Sutherland in at present?"

"I have no friend by that name," he answered, bowing politely.

Here was confirmation of my worst fears. In a voice filled with indignation, which I could not suppress, I cried, "Who is he then? You know to whom I refer."

Looking fixedly at me a moment, he seemed to recall the encounter of the previous day, smiled and said, "Ah! perhaps I am not at liberty to say."

"Thank you, sir," I said cuttingly, "for your most manly conduct," and I departed with anger and fear in my heart.

Before my mental vision, rose my sister's face, her happy face, with that indescribable light of peace and untold joy resting upon it. And then another picture took its place. Again it was her face, but ah! the

light was all stricken from it, all the peace and joy fled. Were words of mine to bring about this change? I who loved her so. I who so longed to save her pain? But my duty lay plain before me, and I shrank from performing that duty even as I might shrink from dealing my loved one a death blow.

As I came into her presence, the words I had framed to utter, once more died on my lips.

"I will see him first and demand an explanation," I decided that would surely be the best course to pursue, but when he came that evening the opportunity to speak alone with him did not present itself. I lulled my conscience to rest by again assuring myself that the morrow should settle all doubts.

But on the morrow we passed the afternoon by the river, as we had so often done before. Still a faint hope lay in my heart that there might be some mistake, but when I reflected that he had never mentioned a honorable termination of this affair to my sister, I was sorely troubled. I doubted much if he had ever spoken of love to her, but what need of words to assure her of his love, when he so often took her unresisting hands and held them close, while they two watched the sunny waters of the tranquil river, in wrapt silence, more full than any speech. This last evening I watched him with renewed alertness, and as the restless autumn wind loosened a shower of yellow leaves from the branches overhead, which fell around them, some alighting on my sister's uncovered hair, he brushed them away with lingering touch. When a little later the evening shadows begun to creep around us, I saw him smooth back the curls from her white

brow, and kiss it with lover's lips. Silence followed unbroken silence, save for the voice of some sweet throated night bird resounding plaintively above the soft rush of the flowing river; whose dimpling waters grew silvery bright beneath the early moonbeams.

"It was time to wake her from this maddening dream, if indeed there was to be an awakening, I thought, with bitterness in my heart.

"Ulrica we must go now," I said suddenly, my voice harsh and unnatural, "bring our wraps, they are under the tree yonder."

As she moved away I stepped quite near to Dr. Sutherland and watching him narrowly said, "I wish to speak alone with you to-morrow, Dr. Ashley."

He started and stepped back, but quickly recovering himself, said in a surprised tone: "Why do you address me by that name?"

"Because I believe it rightfully belongs to you," I answered.

"Your words are puzzling, at least," he said after a little pause. "Please explain."

"I shall do so to-morrow, I assured him, and as my sister came up at that moment, I said no more.

"I decided during the short walk home, that I would disclose all my suspicions to her. Dr. Ashley, as I now felt justified in calling him, left us at the gate, with an assumed lightness of spirit, for I knew he was much disturbed. But again my voice refused to do my bidding when my sister came at my request, kneeling at my feet, her beautiful face all aglow, because of that priceless treasure which she hugged to her heart.

"O love, love! thou mighty mystery, whence cometh

thou with thy untold joys, with thy unspeakable agonies?"

Yes, my voice refused, once more, to place the serpent doubt in her Eden of bliss, when she asked me with surprised questioning glance, "Why do you look so strangely at me, Olive?"

I was silent, for a flood of tears, tears for the sorrow that I felt must come to her, choked my further utterance.

Clasping her arms about me, she whispered consoling words, believing that my tears were for my own recent loss.

"Dear Olive," she said, "only now can I realize the greatness of your loss; now that such a happiness has come into my life."

"Are you so very, very happy, darling?" I asked her.

"Indeed yes," she made answer.

"Should anything occur to part you from him, what would you do, Ulrica?" I said.

"Nay I cannot imagine such a thing," she answered, with a contented little laugh.

How was I to tell my darling that this man was masquerading under a false name? How was I to tell her of my fears and misgivings?

"Not until I know all, will I whisper the least doubt to her," I decided.

The following day being the Sabbath, she, the child and myself went to one of the beautiful city parks, in order to gratify the little one's eager desire to witness a baloon ascension, and after it was over, we wandered about the broad, flower bordered walks, until

we reached the lake side. Finding a rustic seat which encircled a large tree, we took possession of the side nearest the water, and sat for some time silently enjoying the scene before us, while the weary little one fell asleep on its mother's knee.

With soft murmuring sound the dimpling unkissed waves of the lake broke almost at our feet. Already had autumn with frosty fingers, painted the maples along the shore a vivid crimson and bright golden hue, and as yet, the summer wind still tarried, loth to leave the haunts it loved, while there was any vernal thing left to whisper to of the fading season.

After a time the silence was broken by approaching footsteps and two young men threw themselves into a seat not far distant. Evidently they did not perceive us, and the first words I heard stayed me in my intention of rising that they might know that they were not alone.

"Now that your wife has returned so unexpectedly, what do you intend doing with this last victim of yours?" inquired a voice which seemed slightly familiar.

"Nothing whatever," answered the well-known voice of Dr. Ashley. I was then positive that that was his true name.

"Perhaps she will drown herself, as the one of last summer did," said the other sarcastically. "Depend upon it, Edward, my sister will not forgive you another such entanglement," he continued, rising anger in his tones, "and this must be the last. You know Alice perfectly dotes on you and you must treat her square. I will be a party to no more of your deceptions."

"Well, how is a fellow to pass away the time when everything it at a dead standstill?" answered Dr. Ashley, a little angrily.

"I hate this foolish practice of chasing about to summer resorts and I tried hunting and fishing; they are all tiresome. Yes, and even a pair of bright eyes can grow tiresome," he added, changing his tone and laughing lightly, "especially when they are so easily won."

At this my face flamed into anger.

"I see no cause for merriment," answered the other severely, "and depend upon it the end of this affair is not yet."

"Nonsense," exclaimed Dr. Ashley carelessly, "I never expect to see her again, nor that lynx eyed sister of hers who disliked and suspected me from the first; confound her. Hang it all, anyway," he exclaimed in an annoyed tone, "why cannot women do as we do, pass a few pleasant hours or days with one, and then go their way, instead of falling prostrate at one's feet, crying out that their hearts are broken, their lives are ruined. Bah, how tiresome it all is anyway."

"You have certainly had sufficient experience in that line to know," said the other in a disgusted tone.

"Well, well, Walter, drop the subject; I promise you that this shall be my last entanglement. Indeed, I did not intend at the beginning that it should last one half so long," said Dr. Ashley, lightly, and after a time they strolled away conversing on different subjects. For many moments I sat incapable of movement, not daring to glance at my sister's face.

It was thus this narrow souled creature looked upon the winning of the great treasure of her love. To him

it was but a jesting matter, one of many similar episodes in his life. So his worthless time must be occupied by some pleasing pursuit, be it the pursuits of societiers, wasted idling, or a woman's heart. At length I found courage to raise my eyes to my sister's face. It was white as the fleecy gown she wore, and there was a strange light in her eyes, as her gaze was riveted on the sparkling waters before her. Not a motion had she made, not a sign that she had heard those cruel words that I knew had swept heart and brain, even as a hurricane sweeps over a leafy forest, crushing out all life in its devastating progress.

Long we sat in silence, deep, unbroken silence, save for the scarcely perceptible splash of a nearby fountain, and the murmur of voices as their owners promenaded the broad walks of the beautiful pleasure grounds. Silence, save for the music of the band, which came faintly across the waters, mingled with the rustling of the leaves overhead, as a wind from the west tore them loose and scattered them around us. Silence, save for the soft, fluttering breath of the sleeping child on my sister's knee. Thus we sat, until the setting sun dyed the waters of the lake, a deep crimson hue, which gradually faded into gray darkness. And still the silence was broken by no word when the moon rose and brightened the topmost leaves of the trees, and cheered with tender radiant light the shadowed spot in which we were hidden. Softly these moon beams touched my sister's face, revealing more plainly the strange burning light in her eyes.

No longer could I endure the silence, and my voice

startled me when I said, "Had we not better return home, Ulrica?"

"Oh no, dear," she answered quietly, "see how beautifully the moonlight silvers the waters of the lake. Let us enjoy it yet awhile longer."

But ah, how strangely altered was her voice, from which all the melody had fled. The strings of love's harp were broken and never more would they resound with the music of old. How mistaken I had been in expecting as I had, any wild outburst of grief from her, for she would bear silently and bravely, this agonizing death of all love's hopes, just as she had borne the other sorrows of her life.

CHAPTER X.

"Welcome each high ideal! In it's light
All noxious plants that grow within the breast
Will wither, and, like beacon on a crest,
Hope's star shall rise, refulgent on the sight."

An hour later we were home again. My sister laid aside her white plumed hat, her gloves, prepared little Dorothy for bed, and even smiled at something the child said. Quietly, calmly, she went about as though the greatest tragedy of her life had not just been enacted. Later she persuaded the wakeful child to lie down, and returning to the parlor after she had watched the little one fall asleep, drew up her chair to the window, but noticing me as I furtively watched her, she came to where I was standing and with steady glance bent upon me, clasping both my hands and firmly cried, "Olive, why this grief-stricken face?"

But my tongue could frame no answer.

Still looking firmly at me, she went on, "Remember I have that to uphold me which will not fail. Though I have loved, nay worshipped, this man, by the very force of my will which is the instrument of my eternal hope, I will tear this noxious plant from my breast, root and branch. In the light of this eternal hope, it shall wither and die. For it is love like this that retards the spiritual growth and holds one to earthly things. It is love, like this that sinks one to the level of its object. The pain of unrequited love is not one-

half so great as the knowledge this brings me, the terrible knowledge that there still exists a miserably low strain in my nature, else never would I have been attracted to one so narrow souled, so small, so unutterably small.

"Olive, I have loved this man sinfully and the sin dimmed my light, so that I could not see, but now a part of this obstruction has been removed and the light shall increase as I place upon it day by day, piece by piece, my dying love, for die it must. The victor I will be. But the battle cannot be won in a day. Oh sorrow that it is so, for if I were strong, by one fell blow I would sweep this obstruction from my path. But I must, I will be strong.

"It is all clear to me now, I have thought it all out, there by the lake, Olive, and this episode in my life was but needed to cleanse me of all desire for any foolish earthly passion which we in our ignorance call love. For sweet are these words with their hidden meaning: 'Whom God loveth he chastiseth.' I have disobeyed the law when I made for myself an idol of clay, therefore must I suffer the penalty."

She was silent for a brief space and then that fire of a great hope that had flamed up in her eyes, gradually gave place to a look of grievous pain, and her voice faltered for the first time as she said: "To think how I have wasted the precious hours of this past summer, in an idle selfish dream. How many hearts have I helped to bear their burdens? How many smiles have acts of mine brought to faces of little children? Not one, no not one! This poison that has entered my soul deprived me of all power of dis-

criminating between right and wrong, else had I never thought of marriage, of such a marriage as this, for my ideal is so far removed, so altogether above such as he. Oh yes, I must have been mad, utterly dazed, or dreaming. Indeed I must."

Loosing my hands suddenly, she turned to the door, saying: "It is late, Olive, and I must be alone. Good night."

I heard her go up the stairs with a firm step, but something impelled me to follow her, for her death white face alarmed me. As I reached the landing above, she passed through her door, leaving it slightly ajar, and crossing her room reached out her hand for some article on the mantel, when it came in contact with something else, that something else being a little spray of wild blossoms which I remembered he had fastened in her hair but two days since. At touch and sight of that silent messenger of memory, the greatness of her spirit gave way before the greatness of her love. Pressing the now withering blossoms frantically to her lips, she cried, "Oh my love, my love, and this is the end!"

All the desolation of her crushed and bleeding heart, told its terrible tale in that one agonizing cry. Through my own blinding tears I saw her fall prostrate, quivering in every limb, as if in mortal pain; and I, who so longed to comfort her, could do naught but stand idly by, and let her fight this terrible battle alone. For one wild moment, as I gazed upon her, I questioned the ways of my Maker for the second time. "She has not sinned and deserves no punish-

ment," I told myself, my heart rebelling most bitterly at sight of her sufferings.

I went away and left her, but could not rest, and in the silence of the night, many times I crept through the darkened hallway to her door. The dim light of the lamp had burned out, and the room lay in shadow, save for a ray of moon light which strayed softly, tenderly, pityingly, where she still lay, as the slow minutes passed by unheeded. Still I did not dare intrude upon her sorrow, but I lingered near her door, until the gray dawn broke over the land again, and the east brightened little by little, the light falling direct in her wide open eyes, bringing her back to the duties of living.

Struggling to her feet as quickly as her cramped limbs would permit, she caught up the still sleeping child, and fled from the room. Perceiving me she said in a scarcely audible, choked voice, "Olive, bring away my things and bar the door."

Without one backward look she passed down the stairs. When I followed her later one glance at her face assured me that she was again master of herself. Her woman's weakness had vanished, with the night, and the strength of her spirit asserted itself once more. But for the vanished roses on her cheek, but for the restless light in her eyes, I might have thought that no tempter had ever entered our garden of Eden, that no sad eyed sorrow had met with the rosy child love, and crushed out all joy with its heavy glance. For my sister took up the broken threads of her life, and joined them smoothly together, to all outward appearances. Dr. Ashley's name was called no more

in our household and though there was a ring of pain in her voice, by no word or act of hers could I guess what she suffered. She was her old sweet self again, ever kind, loving and thoughtful of others, ever her ready smile cheering with radiant light the pathways of those around her.

She had immediately procured employment at her old trade, and even as in the days of her girlhood, she labored for the needy. Out of her meager earnings many pairs of little feet were kept warm that dreary winter, and many miserable homes of the poor were brightened with her presence. She seemed to lose herself in the sorrows of others, and never wearied of listening to their tales of woe. She would walk blocks through blinding snow storms to find employment for some poor girl. The good she did was immeasurable, and yet how little she really had to give, save her boundless sympathy and advice. She joined no charitable clubs, she feasted on no dainties, while discussing how best to relieve the pressing needs of some poor family, but her mite went direct where it did the most good. And I, a Christian woman, remained in my comfortable home and cared for my household day by day, believing that I was doing my full duty toward God and man.

One cold evening in January my sister returned from her day's labor without the heavy wrap that she had worn away that morning. I looked my astonishment.

"Olive, I knew you would scold," she said cheerfully, holding out her hands to the glowing fire in the

grate, "but I gave it to a poor woman who needed it more than I did."

"This is carrying things too far, Ulrica," I said quite impatiently, "you will ruin your health by exposing to the cold, half clad. You must—"

"Oh but Olive," she interrupted, "had you seen the child in her arms, the wind biting its little face and hands so cruelly, I am quite sure you must have done the same thing."

"But you have a child of your own, Ulrica," I expostulated. "She needs the proceeds of your labor, and it is an injustice to her when you give them to others. Remember, charity should begin at home, and selfishness is sometimes commendable."

"True," she said, "I have a child of my own to provide for, but scarcely do I love her better than the others."

Turning suddenly to me she said, "Olive, did the Nazarine teach that selfishness was something commendable?"

"Judgment must be used, dear, in such matters," I answered her, somewhat abashed before her calm accusing glance.

"Oh yes," she answered quickly, "we must draw a line, but how are we to know where?" So many say: 'We have done our best;' and yet they surround themselves with needless luxuries and fritter away many of the golden moments of life in idleness. Take us for example," she continued, glancing round at our comfortably furnished parlor, "here are many things we could dispense with. Think how many fires their price would build in frozen garrets, or how much

bread could be bought for hungry children with the sum paid for these articles, which we deem necessities, when in fact they are needless luxuries."

"But, Ulrica," I expostulated, "these luxuries, which you so condemn still have their good points. The manufacturing of them gives work to thousands; yes, to millions who would otherwise be out of employment. Constituting the main object of all our striving, in fact it is a spur to the progress of all classes."

"Yes, Olive," she said, "I know this is a broad question to argue, and the pity of it all is that the human mind must set itself so closely upon wordly things, upon the accumulation of pelf, ere it gains the knowledge of its utter worthlessness. For the bare necessities of life are sufficient, and all other possessions but weigh us to the earth. What the world needs is to learn how to interpret and grasp the grand, inspiring truths which exist in all nature, in all souls, then indeed all life would become glorious."

I was silent as I watched her pure nun-like face, all alight as one inspired. "But dear," I said presently, "you can not revolutionize humanity. It is perhaps as you say, the law must take its course."

"But the time may be shortened," she said, "and I shall do my part toward hastening forward that time, that great golden age, the glorious Golden Age."

Suddenly pausing in her restless walk up and down the room, her eyes filled with compassionate tearful longing, she cried, "Oh it is so long in coming and I am wanting in patience. Olive, I am so sadly wanting in patience. Oh I would that I could take all breathing creatures that suffer in my arms and

comfort them. I would that I could bear their burdens for them."

I was terrified, spell bound, by the mighty spasm of pain that seemed to thrill through her whole being at thought of her inadequacy to do this thing. Grasping a chair for support she cried in pain sharpened tones, "Of what use are my puny efforts after all?"

Trembling, crushed, miserable, she stood with closed eyes, white to the very lips. It was one of those moments that come to us all, but to one like her with seventy fold more force, when the whole plan of creation seems suddenly to become useless, senseless and devoid of interest. Numbed, almost paralyzed, our hearts cry out, "What is the use of it all?"

With lips still drawn and white she said, "This is one of my weak moments, Olive. Oh help me."

As I looked at her then, I realized that it was not for such as I to know what she suffered during those moments.

"Ulrica," I said, after watching her for a time, "I truly believe that you would renounce heaven itself, were you offered the opportunity, that you might cheer the lowly and sorrowful."

"Surely, surely," she cried, turning to me in great surprise, as though it were strange I should doubt for a moment.

Her strength had returned suddenly. I knew by her kindling eye and steady tones. I turned away and said no more.

As the days came and went she lost herself more and more in the lives of those around her, and I dared to hope that she had fought down that ignoble love, that she was already the victor.

Once I accompanied her to a small farm house, where a woman was slowly dying of an incurable disease. In reaching that place we traveled the same highways and byways along which she and that other one had wandered during the past summer. How strangely the sighing of the chill east wind, among the bare branches overhead, contrasted with the soft odorous zephyrs that stirred the trembling leaves of that other time. How listless seemed the pale winter sun which occasionally peeped from behind masses of rough gray cloud, while little pools of water here and there stared darkly up at the cheerless sky. All the summer flowers dead, and through sere and vacant meadows the river wound along its sullen way.

But no sign did she make that these spots awakened any bitter sweet memories. Oh, how was I to know the agony of repression she underwent during all those dark winter days? I did not dream of its intensity until one day little Dorothy in searching for some toy, thinking it must be in mamma's old room, gathered all the keys together and fitting one in the lock, threw wide the door and entered. At that moment her mother, coming from her work, ran swiftly up the stairs and reached the landing opposite. She glanced within and uttering a stifled cry, staggered blindly forward and grasped my arm until I cried out with pain. Never before had I seen such agony in human eyes. That white drawn face rises before me even yet. What memories did the sight of that room's interior awaken? That spot where she had fought so

fierce a battle and had suffered all the tortures of which a nature like hers was alone capable.

In silence I led her away. Neither of us ever referred to the incident, but it told me too surely that that battle was still waging fiercely in her heart.

I barred the door of that room, bidding the child never to enter it again.

CHAPTER XI.

'I stand outside the walls of Fate,
I cry aloud in despair,
But only the sighs from the valley below
Float by on the cool night air.
Oh life that was spent in longing!
O love that was given in vain!
Come back through the mists and the shadows,
And rid my heart of its pain.'

Again the soft south winds were bringing the perfume of opening bud and blossom around our little cottage. The leafy thickness of the foliage intermingled with the early spring flowers and glints of sunshine made our little home spot in the world's garden a veritable elfin's retreat. The beauty and grace of old mother earth were flushing into life most gorgeously. Beside our garden gate great clusters of white and purple lilacs were bursting their cleaving cones and nodding to the breeze as if rejoicing in their own loveliness. Over head from bough to bough flitted sweet voiced birds twittering gaily to their mates in anticipation of the joys of the coming golden summer. The sweet subtle scent springing from the shoots of tender green did indeed make the very earth and air rife with fragrance, thrilling the senses with new life, instilling into the mind the joy of living, causing one to realize how great a blessing is mere existence, to breathe, to live, to move.

My heart was filled with thanksgiving to the Creator as I closed our little gate and took Dorothy's hand one evening in early May, and walked down the street and met my sister returning from her day's labor. The child carried in her hand a spray of purple lilacs for mamma to fasten in her belt. After she adjusted it to the child's satisfaction, we loitered along the sunlit pavement for a time before turning our steps homeward.

Suddenly dropping her mother's hand, little Dorothy darted off the pavement, crying out to one of the occupants of a carriage that was slowly passing: "Why don't you come to see us any more like you did last summer and take us to the woods and places?"

She reached out a tiny hand to Dr. Ashley, for it was he whom the child had espied.

Over my sister's face surged a vivid scarlet flame, terrible in its intensity, but it as quickly died away, leaving no trace save an increased burning of that restless light in her eyes.

I stepped quickly in front of her in order to hide her confusion and reached out my hand to Dorothy, for at Mr. Ashley's side sat a small, fair-haired woman whom I immediately concluded was his wife. I knew at a glance that she was a vain, frivolous society woman, a wealthy woman, and that she had sharp eyes, quick to ferret out secrets. She glanced at her husband suddenly, quite suddenly enough to see the guilty flash which swept his face, but his diplomacy came to his aid. Leaning over the side of the carriage he gave his hand to the child, smiling pleasantly. "Ah, my little patient, this is indeed a pleasant surprise," he said smoothly.

I again called to Dorothy.

"Indeed, Edward," came Mrs. Ashley's rather shrill but polished voice, "you must introduce me to your friends."

Smilingly, he complied without a trace of embarrassment in his manner. His wife gave us in turn her delicately gloved fingers and said quite cordially, scanning my sister's face mercilessly: "You and your sister must come to see me. You really must. As for this sweet child, I wish I could carry her off at once," and she patted little Dorothy's sunny curls gaily.

My sister returned the invitation in a steady voice and an easy, dignified manner. I marvelled much at her will power, for I knew that her love had but been as a smouldering fire, which had sprung into glowing flame at sight of its builder.

"Come, Dorothy," I said, for the third time.

"I want a little ride," declared our spoilt darling, making no motion to quit the soft cushions in which she had perched herself.

"I have it," exclaimed the vivacious Mrs. Ashley. "Let the sweet pet alone. In one hour she shall be safely deposited at your door, charges prepaid."

Laughing gaily, she touched the splendid pair of bays lightly with the whip, and the carriage with its occupants dashed away. But there was a ring in that laugh that I did not like and an expression in the steely blue eyes which bespoke suspicion and envy. And indeed, well might that devotee of fashion feel envious, for with all arts and tricks knowable to the dame, she made but a sorry appearance beside my sister, who in her simple black gown stood in sweet unconscious

grace, with a light of real friendship growing in her beautiful eyes, as they looked straight into those before her.

"Ulrica," I said, as we resumed our way, "this is an acquaintance which must not be cultivated. I do not like that woman."

"I do, very much," she answered.

As usual she had probed the soul of the woman, with her deep insight into hidden things, and there found something worthy of admiration. For ever did she look beneath the surface act, which to the common mind but called forth scorn, and understood the weakness which prompted the act, and while pitying this weakness, also find some germ of good.

One hour later little Dorothy came running through the hall, and a smiling, dainty creature stood in the doorway waiting an invitation to enter.

"Ah how cosy, and home like and restful," she exclaimed, taking in with one sweeping glance the interior of our dining room.

"If you would only ask me to stay to tea," she added wistfully. But as if suddenly remembering she cried, "it is too bad, but I am booked for a dinner at the Montgomery's and afterward the opera."

"Come to-morrow," said my sister, smiling at the bright little vision.

"Thank you, I shall be here," she smiled back. "Au revoir," and kissing the tips of her fingers to us she turned and flittered through the door like a gauzy winged butterfly, which she really resembled in her shimmering lace trimmed silken gown.

Little Dorothy was filled with delight at the prospect

of more rides and her little tongue was busy all that evening, talking of the pretty lady who had chatted and laughed with her.

"She told me to call her butterfly and she would call me blossom," continued the child, "and I am to go and see her and take lots and lots of lovely rides."

The child was a lover of bright, beautiful things, as the youthful ever are.

"She is not near as pretty as mamma, though," she went on, looking at her mother. "Won't you get a dress like hers sometime mamma?" she asked, viewing ruefully the tasty but much worn gown.

Taking the child upon her knee my sister looked in the wistful little face and said: "Dorothy, a gown such as Mrs. Ashley wore to-day would cost a great deal of money, were I to get one like it, we could take no more little children for a day in the woods during the whole summer. We could buy no more oranges and medicines to make well again that sick girl whom you were so sorry for yesterday. We could buy no more books for that poor lame boy, who cannot work as others boys do, and who hopes to take care of his mother and little sisters some day by acquiring an education. I know my little girl would not refuse to help her friends, for the loveliest gown in all the world for her mamma, would she?"

"Oh, no, no," cried the little one, the repentant tears standing in her eyes. "I will never ask you to buy a fine dress again."

Her mother smiled and kissed away the tears, and said no more. But the beautiful lesson of charity and self denial took firm root in the young heart.

I mused long and deeply that night upon the transactions of the day. I asked myself why this society woman wished to cultivate our acquaintance; we were evidently so far removed from her station in life. Had she taken a real fancy to any member of our household, or was it only assumed for a purpose? Did she suspect that there was something more than a slight acquaintance between her husband and us?"

"What will be the outcome of this meeting?" I asked myself with a sinking heart, as I heard my sister's restless step on the veranda far into the night.

True to her word, our new acquaintance made her appearance an hour before my sister's return from the shop, on the following day. After greeting me effusively she declared lightly, "I intend to stay quite a long time."

I assisted her in removing the pretty white hat from her frivolous little head and smiled back at her and she thanked me with such childish grace. Though I felt that all this friendship was assumed for a purpose, I could not be cold to her. After an hour's conversation, I was indeed weary of her ceaseless flow of small talk, of parties and balls, of operas and dress. These subjects seemingly occupied all her thoughts.

Little Dorothy coming from her play in the garden, stood observing the white robed fairy from the doorway. "You're awful good," she declared solemnly.

"My little Blossom," cried Mrs. Ashley, running and catching the child in her arms and giving her a kiss. "you droll, droll creature, why do you think me good?"

"Because you're pretty. Pretty people are always good," she said, just as she had once said to me.

"Not always, child," answered Mrs. Ashley, while a shadow flitted swiftly across her sunny face.

"Where is that charming sister of yours?" she inquired abruptly.

"She has not yet returned from her work," I answered.

"Work!" she exclaimed, with wide open blue eyes.

"Yes, Mrs. Ashley," I answered. "My own income is not sufficient to support us, and besides my sister is not one who would permit such support."

She remained silent a moment and then cried: "Now stop this Mrs. Ashley when you address me. Let us be friends, real friends; call me Alice and let me call you Olive, do," she pleaded, actually putting her arms around me. "Then I will ask your sister if I may call her Ulrica. You see, I learned your names from Edward."

Turning a pair of pleading blue eyes to my sister, who had entered at that moment, she said, "May I?"

"Indeed you may," was the ready smiling answer, and she gave our new friend both hands in greeting.

I vaguely wondered what my sister could see in the frivolous little creature to so attract her to even call forth her loving friendship, for such I knew she had given this woman. And to outward appearances it was returned, but a subtle cunning lay beneath the surface of this woman's nature that was unworthy in one so innocently fair. When her carriage came for her at nine o'clock she declared it was the most delightful evening she had ever spent.

We did not avail ourselves of the many kind invitations extended by Mrs. Ashley to visit her, but she

came and went about our home almost as freely as one of its inmates, coming at the most unseemly hours, always bright, always smiling. She and little Dorothy became real playmates, and when she was weary of romping with the child she would sit and watch me wonderingly as I performed some household task. In this manner the days sped swiftly by, and soon would the fair spring be grown to a tall, beautiful maiden whom we would call Summer. Already had her emerald tinted skirts been lengthened by a border of many hued roses, for June, the lovely month of June, was with us once again.

One evening Mrs. Ashley remained to tea, and perceiving my sister ere she reached the gate, cried: "Ah, our gray nun; run, Blossom, and pluck a red, red rose for auntie. We must brighten her up."

Auntie has a white one; it is pretty," said the child, a little puzzled.

"You mean mamma," said Mrs. Ashley.

"No, Auntie Olive," insisted the little one.

"Why does she call you auntie?" asked Mrs. Ashley, looking more puzzled than the child.

"Because I am her aunt," I made answer, in astonishment. "Is it possible you were not aware that this is my sister's child?"

Dorothy had disappeared in quest of the rose. A peculiar expression flitted across Mrs. Ashley's fair face; an expression that was not good to see.

"Then your sister is not the innocent young girl I believed her," she said, musingly.

"My sister is both young and innocent," I quickly answered, my face flaming with indignation at the pos-

sible insult. "Circumstances have made it imperative that she should live apart from her husband, Mrs. Ashley."

Running to me and putting both arms around me, she cried in grieved tones: "Now, Olive, you are angry; indeed, I was so surprised I meant nothing at all, for I never call a woman who has been married young and innocent."

Truly she disarmed me, and I could only smile and assure her that I was not angry in the least. But I did not forget her words nor their hidden meaning.

I could detect a little change in her manner toward my sister when she presently entered the room with the red, red rose fastened in the laces at her throat, and with a light of friendly welcome in her eyes for this woman whom I felt was but waiting an opportunity to crush her. Mrs. Ashley laughingly explained her stupid mistake, and she watched my sister's face furtively as she spoke of her husband. This she very often did, and yet she never asked any questions as to how we made his acquaintance. But with all her watchfulness she was unrewarded by seeing any flush of guilt on my sister's face. She seemed determined to bring about another meeting between them. She pretended to be angry because we never returned her visits, and then told us in her laughing way that she intended to go with us to those sylvan retreats which we had so often visited during the past summer.

"I shall be at your gate as early as 10 o'clock on the Sabbath morning next," she declared. "Now Ulrica, I want you to look your loveliest," she said gaily, when taking her leave. "I should so like to see you in white;

you would be divine," and turning as she reached the gate, she blew us a kiss from the tips of her white jeweled fingers.

A pleased but very thoughtful expression rested on my sister's face as she watched her depart. Once more I warned her against this growing intimacy.

"Indeed, Olive," she answered, "there is much that is good and lovable in her nature."

"I see nothing in her but vanity and frivolity. There can be nothing in common between you," I protested. "Here is a dangerous friendship. Give her up, Ulrica, before——"

"Oh, Olive," she interrupted, "how unobservant you are and, must I say it, uncharitable."

She bent upon me a reproachful look, but there was pity mingled with it also. And I cowered beneath that look and felt my own smallness keenly as she added: "Judge not, Olive, for the rich have greater temptations than the poor."

CHAPTER XII.

"I hear the happy laughter of the brook,
The whisper of the breeze,
Through this same glade my tired eyes may look,
At sunlight and at trees.
Yet what is it the Springtime looks to-day
Being rich in these?"

Above the pulses of the beating air,
That stirs the trembling leaves,
Across the clouds that make the sky more fair
Than foam waves make the seas;
I see another day that dawns above
These self same trees."

The following Sabbath morning dawned bright and fair, just as those other mornings had dawned—those mornings that were buried deep in the past summer's arms. And their memory was buried just as deep in my sister's heart.

Little Dorothy had been waiting some time at the gate, impatient to be off, and called to us as a carriage came swiftly up the street. On the soft cushions sat a perfect vision of daintiness, enshrouded in foamy lace, through whose delicate meshes gleamed folds of pale lavender satin. Bonneted and gloved to perfection, her yellow crimped hair glittering like threads of gold in the sunshine, she was indeed most bewitching. And beside her sat—Dr. Ashley.

"You see I have captured him for the day," she cried gaily, but her eyes were very observant.

Again that scarlet flame swept my sister's face, but as suddenly disappeared, leaving an almost deathly pallor in its place. Dr. Ashley sprang from the carriage and held the gate open for us to pass through. Soon we were whirling rapidly past clover scented pastures, past fields of waving grain, through shady woodlands, past the very spot where we had first met this man who sat opposite us, seemingly as unconcerned of the surroundings as was my sister, for by no sign, save for the increased pallor of her face, could I guess what was passing in her mind.

Meanwhile Mrs. Ashley smilingly exclaimed: "Why, Ulrica, you look like a ghost. You must get some of that beautiful color back that I saw in your face as we drove up."

There was a sneering ring in her voice and a steelly glitter in her blue eyes.

"Mamma's always white now," chimed in Dorothy's little voice, "but she used to have redder cheeks than yours."

Mrs. Ashley laughed. True, it was a little laugh, but it held a world of meaning. Suddenly looking straight at my sister, she asked her: "Do you like to look at any one with whom you are speaking?"

"Why certainly," replied my sister, smiling her rare, sweet smile as she gazed straight into the watchful orbs before her.

"Then why do you not look at Edward when you speak to him? Even Olive has not honored him with a glance from her truthful gray eyes during the whole

of our ride," she said, scanning my sister's face sharply.

"I do not believe Dr. Ashley has addressed either Olive or myself directly since we started, nor we him," answered my sister.

"You are so entertaining and, may I say enticing, we could scarcely look elsewhere than at you."

"Ah, flatterer," exclaimed the little vain creature, becoming somewhat mollified beneath my sister's friendly glance.

How strange that the latter did not understand those little poisoned arrows of speech that had been aimed so surely at her. But they had failed to wound, for she had a shield with which to ward them off, and that shield was innocence. Not so with Dr. Ashley, who sat chafing beneath their sting as they glanced past her and struck him with heavy force. I could not guess by what means his wife had induced him to take this trip, which I knew must be both disagreeable and irksome to him. I knew, too, before the day was done that he thoroughly detested the bright little creature whom he called wife.

Mrs. Ashley turned her attention to Dorothy and said: "Now, my little blossom, how far is it to that shady dell where you used to go so many, many times?" but her eyes were upon my sister's face as she spoke.

"Oh, we've passed it long ago," answered the child.

"Edward!" came Mrs. Ashley's voice, quick and sharp, "you knew where I wished to go to-day. What reason have you to avoid the place?"

He answered her with a swift glance of unholy wrath, but gave the order to turn back, and soon we

alighted on the very spot where my sister had dreamed away the golden hours of a past summer. There was the river on whose banks she and Dr. Ashlev had stood, hand in hand, to watch the moon rise and silver its waters. Overhead the skies were just as blue as on the other days. The south wind whispered among the leafy thickness above us with the same gentle voice. but ah! The tales it told were not the tales of those other days. The flowers bloomed along the brook-side, nodding gaily to their reflections in the rippling water, but they were not the flowers of those other days.

How foolish I had been in allowing my sister to be decoyed to this spot, which must awaken such bitter sweet memories. However, if such was the case she made no sign. Mrs. Ashley pretended to be charmed. She and little Dorothy flitted about over the flower sprinkled sward like two bright winged butterflies, whilst my sister and I stood watching them, laughing to see their merriment. Dr. Ashley sat apart in gloomy silence.

After a time Mrs. Ashley came tripping up to him and cried gaily: "Edward, do you not think Ulrica is lovely in white?" But giving him no time to reply, she turned and plucked a spray of scarlet blossoms near by; indeed, it was from the very spot where he had plucked its counterpart the past summer. Handing it quickly to him, laughing to hide the command, she added: "But she needs a touch of color. Fasten it in her hair, Edward. She is so tall I cannot reach."

Dr. Ashley took the flower in his hand and looked at

my sister, who stepped back a little, while a painful flush mantled her face.

"Ah, she does not need them now. I think her cheek outrivals their scarlet beauty," declared Mrs. Ashley, sarcastically.

Her husband turned and tossed the luckless flower into the river, and giving her an angry glance, said in an undertone: "I wish you would hold your tongue, Alice, or talk sense. For my part I think woman's greatest virtue is silence."

"How cruel you are, Edward," she said, struggling to keep back her tears, her bright manner completely subdued.

"Edward seems to find our society a little dull," she said, turning to us. "No doubt he is longing for his clubs, and—and——"

"Patients?" I supplemented.

"Oh, no; he does not practice medicine, except in cases of emergency, such as when he was called to our little sick Blossom here," she said.

"But I never get sick, do I, mamma?" said the child quickly.

"Your health is perfect, dear," answered her mother.

A flash of comprehension showed itself in Mrs. Ashley's eyes, but she said no more on the subject. Evidently Dr. Ashley had explained the manner in which he had made our acquaintance in a way that best suited himself and would allay his wife's suspicions.

She at once began chatting in her bright, breezy manner, and after we partook of the luncheon, which was a marvel of daintiness, that had been prepared from her own larder, she and little Dorothy began

gathering and arranging great bunches of wild blossoms to carry away. My sister assisted them in their task of depositing several bunches in the carriage, came and sat down beside me and was soon lost in thought, watching the fleecy clouds float across the azure skies. But after a time that subtle unseen cord which holds us yet to the earth drew her thoughts back from the very confine of space where they seemed to be wandering. Suddenly lowering her gaze, she met that of Dr. Ashley bent full upon her. She did not turn away, but still with that same wrapt expression she looked at him charmed, helpless. Gradually a beautiful flush crept to her face; beautiful as the dawning light rose tints the snowy clouds that hover in the East at morning. Ah, well I new that she had forgotten time, place and all things save the handsome face of the man before her.

I rose hastily and stepped between them. As I did so I heard a sarcastic little laugh and, looking round, found that Mrs. Ashley was standing but a short distance from us. All the malignant, spiteful fires of jealousy were burning in her blue eyes, which were almost black with passion. Again she laughed a very little laugh, but it meant more than a torrent of words. Then controlling herself with an effort, she stooped to gather up the blossoms that she had allowed to fall to the ground.

When this was accomplished she assumed her old gaiety of manner and exclaimed, looking at my sister: "Oh, ma chere, you have a deadly pallor."

There was a ring in her voice that told too surely of the jealous fires that were consuming her.

My sister's marvelous will power came to her aid and she regained her composure. Mrs. Ashley, as usual, monopolized the conversation during the ride back to the city. During the day she had obtained a reluctant promise from me that we would visit her on the following Wednesday. Waving us a smiling adieu as we again stood at our gate, she cried, glancing back at my sister: "Indeed, if you do not come I shall believe you have some reason for avoiding Edward and myself."

I demurred against that promised visit, but in vain, for my sister said she knew no cause for refusing to comply with the kind wishes of Mrs. Ashley. I refrained from making known my suspicions—no, my certainties—in regard to the vindictive feelings which this woman entertained toward her. I feared to cause her pain by speaking of any of the incidents of the day, but I felt assured that Mrs. Ashley sought to bring about these meetings between my sister and Dr. Ashley in order to satisfy herself that there was or had been something more than mere friendship between them. So free was my sister from intentionally wronging the woman that she never dreamed she had gained her jealous enmity.

So the following Wednesday evening we paid the promised visit. We had supposed that Dr. and Mrs. Ashley were the possessors of much wealth, but were not prepared to see such lavish splendor as was displayed on every side. The hallway alone of their beautiful mansion contained very nearly the space required to cover all the ground floor of my little cottage. Rare foliage, plants and graceful palms stood

here and there, while costly statues gleamed nymph-like from amongst the vivid green of the foliage or from the little niches. To the right was a broad oaken stairway. To the left tapestry-hung doorways led to the parlors, which were perfect bowers of luxurious, tasteful beauty.

There were soft, velvety carpets, seemingly strewn with woodland blossoms, so natural one scarce dared tread upon them for fear of crushing them. There were silken curtains through which the sunlight flittered with a soft subdued rose-tinted haze. Rare paintings decked the walls, each worth a small fortune. The bronze clock on the mantle chimed the half hour after six as we were ushered in by a liveried servant.

Little Dorothy was chattering with delight and declared: "I shall go and find Butterfly," and away she tripped before we could restrain her. Soon we heard her returning, accompanied by our hostess.

"Ah, I have captured you at last," she exclaimed, going up to my sister and kissing her, tip-toeing in order to do so. She also bade me welcome, but less effusively, for she knew that I understood her. After a few minutes of pleasant conversation the dinner bell resounded through the halls and our hostess led the way to the dining room.

Here the scheme of wealth was still more apparent. Rare silver, cut glass and old china gleamed brightly from the snowy napery. A huge center piece of pink and white roses lent an added grace to the perfectly appointed table.

Dr. Ashley and the friend whom he had called Walter on that summer day were waiting. Both looked up

in surprise as we entered. Evidently our presence was not known to them, and I strongly suspected that Dr. Ashley would have absented himself had he previously been aware of his wife's plans. We were introduced to the young man, who proved to be her brother, Walter Fielden. Mrs. Ashley's eyes were sharp indeed, for she allowed not the least change of countenance to escape her.

"Walter," she said, testily, "if you have met my friends before why did you not say so?"

"I have never had the honor until now," he assured her.

Turning her bright glance on little Dorothy, she asked: "Blossom, did you ever see this young man before?"

The child looked steadily at him for some time, then answered: "I saw somebody that looked like him when Dr. Ashley went with us to the woods one day."

Mrs. Ashley flashed an angry, triumphant glance at her brother and said no more.

I felt my face burning with indignation. Did not the woman know that she was insulting both my sister and myself? And to complicate matters still further my sister, not recalling where we had met him, looked up and said: "I do not remember, do you, Olive?"

And I certainly could only answer "Yes."

My hostess and I exchanged defiant glances and the subject was not renewed. She immediately became her bright self again, but I knew that the heat beneath that velvet, lace trimmed bodice was burning with a fury of jealous spite. A thrill of genuine pity for this woman touched my heart; this woman who strove in

vain to keep her husband's love, who decked herself in laces and jewels that she might be fair in his sight. This woman, who lavished her wealth upon him (for I had learned that he was but a poor physician when they met) as freely as the God-given sunshine is lavished upon the earth, still strove in vain to elicit one admiring or even kind glance from him during the whole evening. His eyes continually sought my sister's face, and truly she was worthy of admiration, though no jewels clasped her white throat or flashed from the coils of her dark hair, which crowned her head more beautifully than any coronet. Her black gown was brightened only by a knot of pink carnations, and the pearly whiteness of her perfectly moulded arms was but half veiled by the close fitting lace sleeves which, were cut after the fashion of the day. More and more did I marvel at her will power as the evening advanced, for from quiet calmness she became gay, happy—yes, brilliant—no doubt glowing in the knowledge that she was conquering herself if ever so slowly.

Mrs. Ashley mistook the happy triumph that lighted my sister's face into such glorious beauty; mistook it for another sort of triumph as she watched her husband's gaze follow her as though it was impossible to withdraw it.

When we returned to the parlor Mrs. Ashley tried hard to keep up her role of lightness of heart, but she soon lapsed into silence, while my sister entertained us with glimpses of her richly stored mind. Never had I seen her show to such advantage. An accomplished society belle with the finished grace acquired by long

training could not have comported herself with more elegance of manner. Added to this was her dazzling beauty and broad intellect. Was it any wonder that this man's eyes followed her when he knew so surely that he, above all men, had won the love of one so peerless? Yet, I knew he had not the soul to realize her worth.

After a time Mrs. Ashley rose and, placing some music on the open piano, asked her to sing a favorite song. Those beautiful lines of George Meredith, "The Deserted Wife," which my sister had set to music and sang so many times for Mrs. Ashley at our home. After striking a few wandering chords her voice rose and filled the room with sweet, tremulous melody. Sad, fervid, entrancing it was, and one could feel her very nature in every note she played or sang. When the song was finished her white fingers strayed into one of those plaintive and appealing melodies from Tannhauser, and she caught the very spirit of the composer, adding to it her own matchless talent. And still again she rendered with such skill and power the grand and moving harmonies of "Gounod," the highly colored movements of "Liszt," that we sat in enraptured silence.

I looked at her face as the soft light of the chandelier fell upon it, and strangely changed it seemed. Her eyes were soft, with a wealth of love and tenderness. The silky waves of her midnight hair fell upon her white neck and forehead, making her beauty dazzling, enticing. I, all unwitting of the pain I might cause, asked for a song, one which she had not sung since that other summer when Dr. Ashley was a welcome guest

in our home. She was silent a moment before beginning it, was though recalling the lines, but with the lines came other memories crowding thick and fast upon her. But with renewed energy, as if trying her power of endurance to its utmost limit, she began the song.

Meanwhile Dr. Ashley, regardless of the watchful eyes of his wife, crossed over to the piano and stood looking at my sister, his face all alight, even as it had been those other times when she had sung this self same song for him. She looked up suddenly and met his gaze, her hands fell with a crash upon the keyboard and again that scarlet flame swept her face with a terrible intensity. But it also receded as swiftly, leaving her white as the dead.

Mrs. Ashley rose and, taking a step forward, stood observing them, her bright eyes fairly scintillating sparks of fire in her jealous rage. But she suppressed her anger with an effort of will power I did not deem her capable of. However, her voice belied her words, for it was still thick with anger as she went up to my sister and said politely: "I fear that we have been too exacting. If the gentlemen will excuse us I have something entertaining to show you in my rooms."

CHAPTER XIII.

The hope of the past
Perished in the blast.
As adversity's winds blew cold;
With sorrowful sound
They moan around
Ere half the years of life's been told.

Mrs. Ashley led us up the broad stairway to her boudoir, a dainty nest of white and gold, which seemed to me like a glimpse of fairy land.

"I wished to have you and Olive all to myself for a little while," she said, motioning us to be seated.

But I knew why she wished us to quit the parlor, for she was goaded almost to madness by the attentions of her husband to my sister, and I pitied her deeply, whilst I thoroughly detested the man who could be so careless of his wife's happiness. I was angry with my sister for her stupidity, as I termed her utter ignorance in regard to Mrs. Ashley's feelings toward her. And I was still more angry with myself for consenting to this visit. It was, indeed, in vain that our hostess tried to be her old bright self, and my sister observed her wonderingly for a few moments.

"Why do you look so at me, Ulrica?" she asked suddenly; "do you pity me?"

There was a hard ring in her voice and a defiant gleam in her eyes, which my sister could not fail to note.

"If you are unhappy I pity you," she answered.

"I am most unhappy," cried Mrs. Ashley, turning like a flash upon her and struggling desperately for self control. "The one thing I value most is denied me, and that is my husband's love."

"Many of us are denied that which we most value, dear friend," answered my sister softly; "but the great Law deals to each his just dues."

Mrs. Ashley stared at her in supreme amazement, but finding in her eyes such a truthful, steady look, she was puzzled. Neither could she resist the charm of that look, for it was one of tender, compassionate love, for did they not both suffer from the same cause?"

And when my sister took the little creature's hands in her own and said softly, "Alice, let me comfort you," she burst into a passion of tears and laid her bright little head on my sister's breast, while between her sobs she gasped, "Of all persons in the world you should be the last one to comfort me."

It was my sister's turn to look puzzled, as she said, expostulatively, "Nay, Alice, do not say so; remember our pledge of friendship," and she clasped still closer the drooping, grief stricken little figure. Indeed, so sure was she that Dr. Ashley cared nothing for her that she never entertained the thought for a moment that she was the cause of this woman's grief. But I could not help believing that my sister had reached a place in his shallow, selfish heart, which no other had ever reached before.

Mrs. Ashley drew back a little and smiling through her tears, looked at my sister with an inscrutable light in her eyes, whether of friendship or enmity I could

not make sure. But she had conquered her temporary weakness and cried gaily: "Say no more, Ulrica. I am really shocked at myself for entertaining my guests with my foolish tears. Oh, here is Blossom," she exclaimed, as the child came tripping in. "Come here, my little tot. I want you and auntie to exert your united influence on mamma and persuade her to accept a token of my love. Now, what shall it be, Blossom, these?" and she reached her hand to unclasp the string of pearls that encircled her throat.

"I know," exclaimed the child. "I want her to have a dress just like the one you wore the first time we saw you."

"I do not remember," answered Mrs. Ashley.

"It was just the color of our lilacs and all trimmed with black lace. Mamma would be so pretty in one like that," and the little one clapped her small hands gleefully.

Mrs. Ashley left the room a moment and returned with the beautiful gown and laid it over the back of a chair for our inspection. My sister looked at it longingly and then looked away, while Mrs. Ashley assured the child that mamma should have its counterpart.

"Alice, I do indeed appreciate the kind motive which prompts your offer, but I cannot accept anything so costly," said my sister, firmly.

"Fie upon your objections," cried Mrs. Ashley, lightly. "I will have none of them."

"Alice," she said, "if you really wish to do me a favor, give me the sum which such a gown would cost. I know a poor family that could be rescued from

the direst want by the use of that sum, and life would again be worth living to them. There are two small children and a young girl who are slowly dying for the need of fresh air and a country life, besides the hard working widowed mother. Do this, Alice, and it will be the dearest, most treasured gift you could possibly make me.

My sister had grown eloquent in her pleadings for those unfortunate ones, and Mrs. Ashley watched her with a new light in her own eyes as she said, thoughtfully: "And I spend for a single gown a sum that would rescue a whole family from want, and that sum would make life worth living to four human beings." There were actual tears of remorse standing in her eyes as she lifted them humbly to my sister's face. "Indeed, I did not know I was so selfish and wicked."

"You are neither selfish or wicked, Alice," quickly answered my sister. "These things have never been brought directly to your notice, while I have lived among them all my life."

"You shall have three times the sum you asked for, Ulrica," cried Mrs. Ashley, with a burst of generosity. And she made good her word by immediately taking from a drawer of her writing desk a roll of notes and placed them in my sister's hand, who said pleadingly. "Go with me to-morrow and give it to them yourself."

"Oh, no," she exclaimed. "I am sure I could not bear the sight of very great poverty," and she shrugged her pretty shoulders as though the thought was not to be entertained for a moment.

At ten o'clock we took our departure. Mrs. Ashley had ordered the carriage brought around for us and promised faithfully to see us on the morrow.

When we again entered our own door, my sister said with a sigh of relief:

"How good it is, after all, to be poor, Olive."

I also sighed, but not with relief, as I said, "I do not agree with you at all, Ulrica," for indeed it was so, for our home seemed small and mean to me on our return. Not a word was said by either of us in regard to the incidents of the evening, although I had assured myself that I would convince my sister that Mrs. Ashley's was a dangerous friendship. But again I feared to cause her pain, and I also shrank from evoking again that accusing look she ever bent upon me when I spoke of the shortcomings of a fellow creature.

Long after I had retired for the night I heard my sister's restless step on the veranda. I decided then and there that I would find both the excuse and the means to take her away for a time at least, where she could meet no more the man whose image she was striving to tear from her heart. When I at length heard her quit the veranda and reach the garden path below, I slipped on a light dressing gown and followed her, for still that fear of Mark Warren lay heavily upon me.

Stepping into the shadow of the vines that almost concealed the entrance to our little cottage, I watched her as she paced back and forth between great clusters of blossoms whose drowsy breath filled the night air with sweetest fragrance. All the wealth of her cloudy hair was flowing in rippling waves down her back.

As she paused and leaned against the vine wreathed lattice, the moonlight fell full across her face, revealing its terrible whiteness and the burning glow in her eyes. It was one of those bright, silent nights when the wind seemed to have forgotten the earth. Even the insects that make night resonant with sweet, restless sound had chirruped themselves to sleep, and the very night seemed holding its breath as if waiting for something to happen. Realizing the lateness of the hour, I was about to call her to come indoors, when I heard a soft step on the gravelled walk and, looking up quickly, there, like an evil thing of the night, creeping to our very door, stood Dr. Ashley close beside her. Raising her head from its drooping posture, she looked at him fearfully at first and seemed struggling to escape him. But quite unable to resist that subtle power which he held over her, she permitted him to take both her hands in his own.

Again had she forgotten all things save his presence; that his handsome face and love-lit eyes were before her. And when he put his arms about her, drawing her close, and said softly, "Love, forgive me," she still made no resistance.

But when he stooped and kissed her upturned face it seemed to wake her with a shock to full consciousness of the bitter present. Struggling from his embrace, in a scarcely audible, choked voice she cried, "Oh, this is terrible! Leave me."

I could not know the depths of her despair, for it was beyond earthly sorrows, as she realized her own weakness—that weakness of the soul, which she had sworn to conquer. I think she was dazed into helpless-

ness by its enormity, for she seemed incapable of further movement or speech for the time being.

I sprang in front of Dr. Ashley and my voice, too, was choked, but it was with a terrible anger as I cried:

"How dare you, how dare you!"

"I do not know how I dared," he made answer, and turned to quit the spot, when my own words were repeated, "How dare you; oh, how dare you!" in a voice so shrill with rage that I failed to recognize it.

However, I did not fail to recognize the small figure of Mrs. Ashley as she stood directly in her husband's path seeking to bar his progress. But he pushed her roughly aside, passed through the gate and was gone ere she could say more.

Baffled in her attempt to vent a part of her jealous rage upon him, she turned to us. Such deadly hatred, such anger I never saw in woman's face before, white, drawn and quivering as it was with unholy passion. She stood before us a moment in silence, so beside herself that she could not speak. But finding her voice at length, she fairly shrieked, pointing a trembling finger at my sister with withering scorn: "And you are the woman who pretended to be my friend and with your smooth tongue and innocent, truthful looks thinks to blind me to your guilty love. Oh, to think of your perfidy," and her voice still rose with her increasing passion, "when this very night you almost convinced me against my common sense that you were my friend and I had begun to love you as such. And I find you late at night in my husband's arms. Oh, you

do well to shrink before me," she cried; "me whom you have so wronged."

My sister still stood dazed and helpless before her, but not shrinking.

"Madam," I cried, as she paused for breath, "it is quite useless for me to attempt an explanation, for your mind is too narrow to comprehend the truth in regard to this unfortunate affair."

"Explanation, indeed," she sneered. "Could you explain away a fact?"

"I could," I answered, "for despite such damaging circumstances, my sister is still as free from guilt as is her little child."

"Bah; I despise you with your senseless subterfuges, and as for your sister, I could kill her," cried the irate woman, viciously, "for she has ruined my life."

At this my sister, finding her voice, cried imploringly, even humbly: "Oh, Alice, dear Alice, do not say that; allow me to explain," and she sought to take the other's hands.

But the angry little woman drew back, saying: "Do not dare to touch me, you low, fallen creature! Adventuress, now I know for what purpose you procured those notes from me to-night. Deny it if you can. It was to deck yourself in such finery as you are wearing to-night that you might look the more beautiful in your lover's sight. Of a truth your charms this night are unsurpassed, with flowing hair and——"

"Madam!" I interrupted, myself so angry that I scarce could keep from doing her personal violence, "it is a lie; do you hear, it is a lie. You shall have

your paltry gift returned to you," and I stepped toward the door that I might get the notes.

"No, Olive," said my sister, firmly, "that you shall not do."

"Indeed no," exclaimed Mrs. Ashley, with such scathing scorn that it was unbearable to me, and I turned upon my sister angrily and shaking her roughly, cried: "Ulrica, have you not one vestage of pride about you?"

"I have no false pride, Olive," she answered quietly.

"Let her keep them," cried Mrs. Ashley, "that she may flaunt the more laces and ribbons on the white gowns she wears to meet her lover in the garden. Ulrica Warren, do you think this is the first time I have watched the place at night?" she continued, turning again fiercely upon her, "and found you waiting and watching for him? Do you think it is the first time I have followed him here? Do you think——"

"Oh, Alice," cried my sister, falling on her knees before the infuriated woman, "I beg of you to listen to me; let me——"

"You miserable creature, I will not degrade myself by bandying further words with you," interrupted Mrs. Ashley, and she turned swiftly about and left us.

"How could you bear it, Ulrica?" I cried, my anger increasing as I saw her humble herself thus. "Why did you not throw her paltry gift in her face?"

She rose from her knees and softly answered, "I bore it for the sake of those little ones, Olive."

Truly I was answered. And she had borne this woman's scorn and bitter accusations in regard to the procuring of those notes with Christ-like meekness,

that those needy ones might be lifted from want. As I realized her greatness of spirit my anger gave place to deep admiration for her and shame for my own smallness. I believed myself a model Christian woman, but oh, where was my meekness of spirit?

CHAPTER XIV.

Temptation steals in through my door,
And smilingly whispers o'er and o'er
Cease this endless and bitter strife,
For love is lord of all thy life.

Silently we entered the house and gained our room, when Ulrica turned to me with a fear in her eyes which amounted even to horror, as she said: "Olive, what if I should prove after all to be only a weak, foolish woman?"

"That you will never be, Ulrica," I hastened to assure her. "Let me tell you what a weak, foolish woman would do who is in your position. She would make no effort to subdue this unholy passion, and would give way to it, allowing it to drag both body and soul to the lowest depths."

But still the fear grew and deepened in her glowing eyes, and her voice was sharp with pain as she cried: "Just what I may do yet. I, who believed myself so brave, so strong, so sure of winning all life's battles. Oh, how far have I fallen this night? But who can know the greatness of my love or the depths of my despair? Oh, that I could strike this evil thing from my life. This evil thing that enthralls me as in a maddening dream from which I wake with an unutterable horror."

Sinking on her knees by the bedside she buried her white face in the pillows and groaned aloud. I was a

Christian woman, yet I sought to teach her the gospel of Satan, for I went to her and said: "Ulrica, strive to bring yourself to hate this man, who has brought such a bitter sorrow into your life."

She arose and stood before me with that light in her eyes which I had learned to so dread.

"Olive," she said, "when I suffer any one to gain the power over me that will cause me to hate, I shall indeed feel that I am undone. I do not hate."

I turned from her in confusion. When I again dared to glance at her, a great fire of hope and determination had flamed up in her eyes and her voice was soft and tremulous with joy as she said: "But now I said that I despaired. It is an ignoble word, which means weakness and sin. I will not despair. I will be the conquerer and not the conquered. Olive dear," she continued, "rest assured that I shall never disgrace you. Oh, worldly one," and she smiled at me, "for if we were both free and he should come kneeling at my feet and pray me to go with him and be his own always, I should say him nay. For I know this man is not my equal. I know I have the will power to rise triumphant above this unworthy love."

"Was there aught of egotism about this proud, yet humble one? Again I answer, 'No.'"

The following morning Ulrica was up with the singing lark, and while I prepared breakfast she hurried away to give to her poor friends that gift of Mrs. Ashley; that gift for which she had humbled her pride in the dust, that life might be worth the living for them again. No trace of the tempest of a few short hours

before was discernable in her bright face when she returned.

"Oh Olive," she cried, "if Alice could but have heard their words of thankfulness, could but have seen the joy on the faces of those little children at prospect of a country life; could but have seen the grateful tears of the poor mother and invalid daughter, she must indeed have been gladdened for many a day."

During all the long hours of that day my mind was busy with the problem of where to go and how, for I was determined to take Ulrica where the evil influence of Dr. Ashley's presence could cast its spell over her no more. Well I knew that should she meet him again all her great resolutions and high resolves would melt away, even as mists before the noonday sun, and the same old struggle to regain her lost footing must be gone over. These struggles which were so fierce in their intensity that they must in time wear out both body and soul.

As I was idly turning over the morning paper an advertisement attracted my attention: "Wanted—A companion for an invalid lady; also a governess for two small children; latter must be good musician. Address Box 356, Sacramento, Cal.

I was at once on the *qui vive*. Here was an opportunity to put almost the width of the continent between her and that man. I immediately wrote an answer and mailed it.

Ulrica returned home earlier than usual that day, in her hand an evening paper. Without a word she laid it before me pointing to an article headed in glaring letters, "Scandal in high life."

She stood by me while my eyes followed line after line, until I saw her name mentioned in scathing terms as the evil genius who had separated Dr. Ashley and his wife. Dropping the paper I looked up at her. She was observing my face closely and noting my horrified look, asked calmly: "Does it touch me, Olive?"

Knowing her as I did, knowing all the circumstances that led to this shocking termination of this unhappy affair, knowing her moral superiority *over* her judges, I could only answer, "No, Ulrica, it does not."

She stooped and kissed my forehead tenderly. "Dear, loving sister," she said.

"But the world will never know, Ulrica," I gasped, overcome by the heaviness of the disgrace which had fallen upon us.

A long time she stood and looked at me, thinking deeply. "I shall be proud indeed," she said, "when I have attained to that state of wisdom wherein I can obey His commandment, 'Avoid the appearance of evil.'" Oh, it takes much learning with many bitter lessons ere one can attain to it, but it can be done."

"Most bitterly do I deplore the loss of Alice's friendship," she added, "for I fear for her and I would that she knew the whole truth."

Yes, there was still nothing but tenderest pity and love in my sister's heart for this woman, who in her jealous fury had blasted her reputation, bitterly denouncing her as an adventuress that the whole world might read and believe in her guilt.

"I have lost my position, Olive," she said presently. "Mrs. Mathews gave me this paper, bidding me read,

and told me with cold scorn that my services could be dispensed with. I did not blush with shame nor shrink before the cruel look she gave me, and the still more cruel words she spoke."

"Oh why will one condemn their fellow creatures at the first suspicious circumstance, never caring to seek for the real truth, which so often is completely hidden by these same circumstances," she cried, with quivering lips, and sorrowful eyes.

I thought of how Mrs. Ashley had waited and watched for the opportunity to crush my sister, who was as far above her as the stars. I had not the greatness of heart to forgive the frivolous little creature, though I knew she was incapable of fathoming my sister's character, and from her own narrow view must have felt herself deeply wronged. But I thought not of these things when I said, "Ulrica, you cannot now say that there is much good in Mrs. Ashley, when she has branded you in the eyes of the world as an infamous fallen creature."

But she softly answered, "Remember, she knows nothing but the plain circumstances, and they are very condemning. Must I tell you again, hasty one, to judge not?" and she smiled in her own bright way once more.

"Now, Olive, have done with useless repining," she added, "for this must be borne and bravely, too, as must all misfortunes." So she went about her evening tasks cheerfully. But well I knew that the cruel shaft of disgrace had left its sting in her heart.

Meanwhile I perused the disgraceful story of that separation to the end. Dr. Ashley had been little

respected on account of numerous escapades, but had been recognized in society for his wife's sake, also for the sake of their supposed wealth. But this had sadly diminished with the continual draft of their enormous household expenses, his gambling and other wasteful expenditures and lastly, unfortunate speculations, until the inroad was so deep that a crash was imminent. It came with the breaking up of his household.

After a terrible scene with her husband, on her return home the night before, Mrs. Ashley in her maddened rage had fled, leaving all behind her, save her jewels and wardrobe. She had bitterly denounced her brother, accused him of being accessory to her husband's deceptions. So it was that the poor petted child of wealth was herself adrift on the world; for she had once told me that her brother was her only surviving relative.

"What will she do?" I asked myself, "this woman who all her life has had servants to come at her beck or call. This woman who had scarcely performed a useful task in her life, this woman who had declared that she could not bear even to enter the homes of the poor, or look upon extreme poverty. And now the grim-eyed monster was to enter her own door, not pausing to inquire if she could bear sight of his gruesome countenance, or list to the sound of his relentless oncoming footsteps. What indeed, was the fate in store for her."

The following day, I busied myself with preparations for our departure. Should I receive a favorable reply to the application I had made for situations for

Ulrica and myself, I intended to delay not an hour longer than was necessary.

When I told Ulrica of my intentions, she said, "Olive, you think me so weak that I must flee from temptation, but I wish to remain here, and prove to you, to the world, and most of all to myself, that I can and will rule my spirit. Besides," she added, "I cannot leave my poor friends."

"Remember, dear," I answered, "the poor ye have always with you," there will be other hearts to gladden with your sympathy and help. The change will benefit both," I added firmly.

For once I was obdurate. My determination to leave the place was not to be easily shaken. Though she knew it not, I felt that the time had come when she must receive help in overcoming this obstacle, that had risen serpent-like in her pathway, refusing to be subdued. Though crushed time and again by her mighty will power, it still flourished with a tenacity of life that was almost beyond comprehension.

I went out during the afternoon to make some purchases. Dorothy accompanied me, as was her custom, leaving Ulrica standing in the porch smiling at us an adieu. It was late when we returned and our little cottage was silent and dark. I felt a strange foreboding creep over me, as we hurried up the walk and entered the half open door. The silence was oppressive, as though the weight of misfortune hung heavy in the very air. I called Ulrica's name but there was no response. I lighted a lamp and looked about yes, looked for something. I did not know why it was that I seemed in such haste, nor did I know what it

was for which I was searching, but search I did, at length finding that which deprived me, for the time being, of all power of speech or action. In my hand was grasped a slip of note paper. I read:

"Ulrica Dear:

"I beseech you to see me this evening. Oh, do not deny my request. I shall be waiting down by the river, you know the spot, at eight o'clock. If you will, come prepared to go away with me. E. A."

Shocked, stunned beyond reasoning, I sank helpless into the nearest chair. I felt instinctively that my sister had fled with this man, deserting me and even her little child, that little child now was standing before me, with frightened face and tear-dimmed eyes, whose voice awoke my benumbed faculties to sudden life, as she cried, "Are you sick, Auntie Olive? I will go get mamma. Where is my mamma?"

The red blood flew to my face in a mighty wave of shame and anger, when I realized that I could not answer the child. But my anger was not directed toward my sister, whom I would ever hold blameless, come what might. It was directed toward the man who had dared to make such a proposal to my pure, white-souled darling. Knowing the power he held over her, he sought to make true the guilt with which the world had already branded her. I thought of how immeasurable would be her despair when she realized her fall from that high pedestal on which she had stood. "No, on which she stands," I declared frantically.

I glanced at the clock. It was the half hour after eight, but I was not daunted. I grasped Dorothy's hand and hurried out the gate, leaving her at our nearest neighbors. I controlled my eagerness to be gone as best I could, saying I would return shortly. I soon reached the highway which led to that place of meeting.

"My darling needs me, oh she needs me," I kept repeating over and over. Who in all the wide world was there but myself to sustain her in this crisis of her life? As I hurried on through the darkness I thought of my promise to my dying mother, and it lent wings to my feet. Surely my beseeching prayers would reach the ever listening ears of the loving Father, as I prayed so fervently that I might reach that place of meeting ere it was too late.

At length I saw Ulrica a short distance ahead of me, alone, standing quite still as if undecided as to her next step. Then she went on. I tried to call out to her, but my voice failed me and I sank helpless to the ground, breathless and spent with fatigue. At that moment Dr. Ashley came forward to meet her, for he had perceived her at the same time as myself. She made not the slightest resistance when he took her in his arms and thrice kissed her upturned face.

"Why are you so late, darling?" he asked in his old time tender tones. I could not catch her answer.

"You will go, Ulrica?" he questioned.

For answer she leaned her head on his shoulder, caressingly, yieldingly. She was lost! Oh, yes, she needed me!

"Ulrica," I cried out at last, coming up to them, "you must come with me." She did not start or move away from him or seem surprised, but in a voice that was strange and heavy said, "I knew you would come, Olive."

I took her hand and sought to lead her away, but Dr. Ashley pushed me back roughly, saying, "Your interference is neither needed nor wanted."

"My interference is both needed and wanted, sir," I cried, stung to fierce anger by his insulting tones.

"Ulrica," I repeated firmly, "you must come with me at once."

But still she made no move; I pleaded with her.

"Ulrica, you would not leave me, me who has been so dear to you, all your life."

"He is more to me than you are," she answered in a stifled voice.

"Think then of your little child," I cried, in desperation, "your little child who but now asked for her mother, and I dared not tell her where she had gone."

"He is more to me than my child," she answered in the same heavy, hopeless voice.

I was in despair. What could I say to break the spell that had bound her body and soul in such utter

helplessness? What power, indeed, could words of mine have over her, when that handsome child of

Satan kept whispering his selfish love into her ears, and with lingering, caressing touch smoothing back

the curls from her white brow.

The sight maddened me. Was I to stand by and see

him take away the one treasure of my life and drag her to depths of despair, of which even I could have no conception. No, a thousand times no !

I racked my brain for some word that would save her. I prayed, as I had never quite prayed before, for inspiration, to tell me what to say or do in this most trying time.

"Ulrica," I at length cried out, "is he more to you than your Eternal Hope?"

No," she cried, her voice ringing out clear and full of hope once more. Without a moment's hesitation she slipped from his detaining arms and stood beside me.

"Then after all, you care nothing for me, you have no thought for my happiness?" he said, turning to Ulrica.

"Oh, yes," she answered softly, with a ring in her tones that was good to hear, "I have thought for the happiness of all living creatures. But I wish them the happiness which uplifts and is lasting, not that which drags them down and is but momentary, Dr. Ashley," she continued; "from my heart I wish you could feel the joy that I do in this moment; but you will never know what real happiness is, until you learn to rule your spirit for the sake of right."

"Bah," he cried impatiently, "I do not care to hear a sermon. Once more, and for the last time I ask you, will you come with me, or not?"

With a sigh Ulrica answered, "From my heart I pity you, Dr. Ashley. Good bye."

Turning swiftly she clasped my hand and we left

CHAPTER XV.

Broken measures, fine completeness,
In the perfect whole:
Life is but a day in fleetness
Richer in all strength and sweetness,
Grows the striving soul."

Evidently Dr. Ashley knew by the tone in which she uttered that one word that his case was hopeless; for when he spoke again his voice had lost its tender persuasiveness. It was harsh and angry, telling too surely of the man's selfish small nature.

"Then after all, you care nothing for me, you have no thought for my happiness?" he said, turning to Ulrica.

"Oh, yes," she answered softly, with a ring in her tones that was good to hear, "I have thought for the happiness of all living creatures. But I wish them the happiness which uplifts and is lasting, not that which drags them down and is but momentary, Dr. Ashley," she continued; "from my heart I wish you could feel the joy that I do in this moment; but you will never know what real happiness is, until you learn to rule your spirit for the sake of right."

"Bah," he cried impatiently, "I do not care to hear a sermon. Once more, and for the last time I ask you, will you come with me, or not?"

With a sigh Ulrica answered, "From my heart I pity you, Dr. Ashley. Good bye."

Turning swiftly she clasped my hand and we left

him standing there in the shadow of the trees. A very part of the darkness itself, he was.

In silence we hurried along the dusty highway, my heart too full of thanksgiving for any words. I stopped to fetch Dorothy who was tearfully watching for me. Ulrica kissed the tearwet face of her child with trembling lips. When we reached our little gate and passed up the walk to the door of our cottage, she cried out suddenly, "Oh, Olive, never was storm-tossed mariner so joyed at sight of native land and home, as I to see this spot once more. Never was the waiting earth more gladdened to feel the first kisses of the morning sunlight, than I to feel these boards beneath my feet. Never was mother thrilled with greater joy by the cry of her first born, than I by the familiar sounds which greet me about our little home."

And when I had lighted the lamp I saw that her face was all a quiver with joy. Her eyes rested upon each object in our parlor even as one who had wandered in strange lands for years and had but just returned to satisfy the yearning gaze with the sweet sights of home once more.

When Dorothy was asleep for the night, Ulrica came to me taking both my hands and said, "Olive, never did woman have a truer or more faithful friend than I. The service you have rendered me this night, who can measure it's greatness. I want to tell you, dear, how I hearkened to the voice of the tempter. When that note came to me I had no intention of complying with the request it contained. As the moments passed by, my thoughts centered more and more upon him; as the hours drew near I could not resist that power

which drew me out from the protecting roof of our home; that power which drew me away from all hope, from you and my child to whom I am bound by the sweet ties of kinship. I longed desperately for your coming. I struggled with myself as I never did before, but as the hands of the clock crept slowly around, nearing the appointed hour, I saw naught but his outstretched hands and love-lit eyes before me. So it was that I went and as a last hope, thinking that you might save me from myself, I left this note where you could not fail to see it. I felt that you would follow me. Still as I was drawn irresistibly toward the spot where I knew he was waiting, thrice I turned about to retrace my steps, but I could not. And when I heard his voice once more when I felt his arms about me, I knew in that moment that he was dearer to me than all else on earth. But the knowledge brought no joy with it, for I still remembered, though dimly, that there should be something dearer to me than this man, but I was utterly unable to make it out. Oh, it was a wild hopeless moment, Olive, and I kept listening, longing for the sound of your voice.

"But when you spoke of yourself and of the child, my love for you sank into insignificance in comparison. All my mother love withered and died before the flame of my unholy passion. But when you spoke to me of my eternal hope, I knew that was the one thing that was dearer to me. I knew I could not hold this sort of love and that hope both in my heart, and I shall never cease to fight against this sinful desire, until I am cleansed of it."

Bravely and unflinchingly she went about this task,

Many were the slights she received from those she had deemed her friends. Even among those whom she had succored, some there were who pointed at her the finger of scorn. But with a light in her eyes, such as He might have had when He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," she went about her daily tasks without murmur or complaint. But it was not to be. Many misgivings assailed me during that long journey, although I knew I was doing a wise thing in putting the space of many miles between my sister and Dr. Aspley.

A few days later a favorable answer to my letter came from Sacramento, California. I hurried the preparations for our departure, partly through fear of Mark Warren. Should a copy of that account of Ulrica's supposed disgrace ever fall into his hands, I did not doubt the consequences, should he find us. I believe that he would make good his word, and persecute her, even to her death. It was my intention to close our cottage, leaving all things in readiness for our return at any time. But she, in her greatness of heart, pointed out to me another and better use for our home.

"Dear," she said, "if you will permit Mary Hanson and her mother to take possession during our absence, it will be a real benefit to you, for they will take excellent care of the house and grounds. Think, too, what a boon it would be to the poor invalid mother and hard-working girl to have a little garden spot and free rent."

Even in those days of her great sorrow, she forgot no one. She took no opportunity to do a good deed slip by unheeded. Mary Hanson and her mother gladly accepted the care of their place, thanking me

over and over for my kindness, though it was not I to whom thanks were due.

The following morning at dawn we took our departure. As we passed through the gate I turned and looked with regretful eyes upon the familiar scene, even then longing for the time when we should return. Oh, would that we had never beheld the spot again! But it was not to be. Many misgivings assailed me, during that long journey, although I knew I was doing a wise thing in putting the space of many miles between my sister and Dr. Ashley. Still we were fugitives, for I could not rid me of that haunting fear of Mark Warren. So it was that none save Mary Hanson and her mother knew our destination.

When we arrived at Sacramento, I procured tickets for Ballard station. A ten-mile run brought us to a quiet peaceful little village nestled among green foliage at the base of a sloping hill. A carriage was in waiting. The driver bowing, cap in hand, inquired if we were the ladies whom Mrs. Ballard had sent him to meet. Receiving an answer in the affirmative, he set Dorothy on the cushioned seat and we followed. Soon we were speeding along a smooth country road, bordered by most luxuriant growth of shrub and vine and blossom. A two-mile drive brought us to a stone gateway through which we passed on up a broad, sweeping avenue, where, on either side stood numerous tall poplars, whose slender upright branches, finger-like, pointed skyward. The flush of sunset lay over the palatial mansion that burst full upon our view, as we swept round a curve

in the avenue and came to a standstill at the foot of the broad steps leading to the wide entrance. The doors were thrown hospitably open to welcome us. My heart warmed to those open doors.

I stood a moment and reveled in the beauty of the scene about us. That indescribable hush which ever follows the departure of the day king seemed to pervade all space. The air was heavily laden with perfume of honeysuckle blooms, whose parent vine covered the whole front of the first story, reaching to the veranda above, which ran around the front and south side of the entire dwelling. A tall observatory in the center gave added height and grandeur to the lofty massive building. As we ascended the steps I caught a glimpse of the gardens stretching away to the south, and even with that one glimpse I likened them to the garden of the gods.

The housekeeper, a cheerful-faced woman, stood at the door.

"Mrs. Ballard is a great invalid," she said, "but she will be pleased to see you when you have rested."

Calling to a young woman, who evidently was in waiting, she said, "Nannie, you may show these ladies to the rooms prepared for them."

We were conducted up a broad flight of stairs, which outrivaled Mrs. Ashley's in grandeur. Wealth, luxurious wealth, surrounded us on every side. We were each assigned a room directly off the main corridor. Nannie left us, promising to return within the hour and conduct us to Mrs. Ballard's apartments. I immediately took a mental inventory of my surroundings. Tall glass doors led to the veranda on the

south. Soft rich carpets were under foot. Great
 easy chairs were placed invitingly near the place
 draped open windows. Beautiful paintings were
 hung tastefully against the delicately tinted walls. A
 carved mantlepiece on which stood homelike and
 cozily a little marble clock, whose hands pointed to
 the exact hour, was in either room. Evidently our
 comfort had been well considered. Our luggage
 was brought up, and after changing our dusty travel-
 ing attire, we waited for Nannie. Dorothy's delight
 was unbounded as she viewed our beautiful surround-
 ings and declared that this should always be her
 home. But neither Ulrica nor myself could guess
 how prophetic were her words. At the appointed time Nannie made her appearance
 and we followed her along the corridor to the front
 of the building on the north side. The girl tapped
 lightly on a half-open door, and a hearty, kindly voice
 bade us enter. I looked at the invalid, I must admit
 rather curiously, for before me was a perfect spec-
 imen of health and hardihood, as one might behold in
 a long day's travel. She sprang up from her easy
 chair and held out a plump beringed hand in greet-
 ing, but as if suddenly remembering her invalidism
 she stopped and I think would have fallen but for
 Ulrica, who was a little in advance of me. "Ah, you see I am a great invalid," she gasped,
 and motioned for Nannie to fan her. However she
 soon regained her strength, "I have been so anxious
 to meet you," she declared, "and I am quite sure I
 shall fall in love with you both. I have been so long
 ly," she added with a sigh.

After making a few kindly inquiries as to our journey she ordered tea to be sent up at once. "For," she explained, "I do not feel equal to reaching the dining-room tonight, and I do not want you to dine alone on our first evening."

"Send the children down," she called, as Nannie turned away to carry out her orders.

Calling Dorothy to her, Mrs. Ballard won the child's heart at once by promising her a pony to ride on the morrow. Soon the two little girls made their appearance, pretty brown-eyed children of eight and ten, who looked shyly at us from the open door. But their shyness soon vanished under Ulrica's smile and they each gave her a kiss of welcome. They were delighted with the acquisition of a new playmate and soon Clara and Nelly, as they were called, led Dorothy away to their own dominions in triumph.

During that delightful evening Mrs. Ballard gave us the history of each member of her household, beginning with her late husband's father, whom she laughingly termed the "miser," down to the gardener's newest baby, who was "such a little darling." She wished us to see him on the morrow. It was quite evident to me that this woman was a whole-souled creature who took the goods the gods provided and was content. But the whim, for whim it was, to be thought an invalid, I could not understand. This whim proved very irksome at times, so full of life and buoyant spirits was she. I judged that she had passed her thirtieth year and would have been quite pretty but for the excessive plumpness, acquired for want of exercise, and a more

wholesome routine of daily life. Her bright brown eyes were full of snap and her face full of good red blood. "Invalid, indeed," I mentally ejaculated. "How selfish of me," she suddenly cried, glancing at the timepiece on the mantel. "See it is eleven o'clock and you must both be weary from traveling."

I ventured to inquire as to our respective duties. Laughing pleasantly, she said, "The very first requirement that I shall make of you both is that you must carry smiling faces."

"But first in the morning," I began.

"Rest yourselves," she answered kindly, and tapping a little bell on the table beside her, Nannie made her appearance.

When we regained our rooms there was Dorothy tucked away in mamma's bed, sound asleep. Evidently we were to be waited on as though to the manner born.

The following morning Dorothy and Ulrica rose at dawn and the chambermaid called to me that they had found a little flight of steps which led from the veranda to the garden below. "We shall take a walk among the flowers, auntie," cried the small voice in delight.

Hastening my toilet that I might follow them, I stepped out on the veranda, but paused, enthralled by the loveliest scene that had ever gladdened my eyes.

At my feet stretched the garden which I had likened to "the garden of the gods." Great foliage plants spread their huge leaves abroad on either side of a winding gravel walk. Feathery ferns grew rank and tall beneath their sheltering shade. Semi-trop-

ical blossoms of every conceivable hue from the flaming poppy to the tall gracefully nodding Calla-lilies. Daffodils which had stolen a part of yesterday's sunshine with which to deck themselves, made the place rich with riotous color. Bluebells reflecting the azure sky above grew in plenteous profusion. Long beds of purple, gold and white pansies, lifted wee, winsome faces skyward. Passion flowers and clematis wound their clinging tendrils about the snowy trellis work of little summer houses, four of which I could plainly see from where I stood. And even as I breathed in the cool dewy fragrance and listened to the sweet sound from voice of bird and insect, the whole scene was lit up by a flood of golden glory, changing dewdrops into myriads of sparkling diamond eyes that trembled as a light wind shook the blossoms on which they rested. Now indeed did the poppy flame and the daffodils glow. My eye wandered beyond this enchanting garden to the broad, sloping sun-kissed meadows and fields and woodlands. Far in the distance westward, on the very verge of the horizon, a chain of blue-veiled mountains lay misty and dark. A slight movement below attracted my attention and I brought my wandering gaze back to the garden. It was the peculiar actions of a little old man, a very old man, who was concealing himself behind a tall laburnum bush peering through its foliage at my sister, in open-mouthed amazement. I concluded that he was one of the neighborhood, poor or possibly a tenant, so shabbily clothed he was, his garments rusty and tattered with age. An old torn straw hat which had been removed from his shin-

ing bald head, lay at his feet. There were a few straggling gray hairs hanging unkept and unsightly over his collar and beneath his chin. As Ulrica and Dorothy passed the spot, unconscious of his proximity, his surprised look gave place to a leering smile, and his small eyes glittered.

I wondered greatly at his strange actions, but soon a solution of the mystery entered my mind, for of all the beautiful sights of dewdrops, blossom, or sunlight, in that garden, Ulrica, white-robed and stately, outrivaled them by far, with her living breathing beauty. Still this old man's actions were very strange.

The two little girls were up betimes also, and perceiving Dorothy in the garden, made haste to capture her, and between them she was taken to breakfast in the nursery.

Ulrica regained the veranda and Nannie at that moment announced that Mrs. Ballard was awaiting us in the morning room.

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CHAPTER XVI

At that moment a little old man entered the room, smiling and bowing most politely as he advanced to where we were. He did not seem an entire stranger. Ah, he was the self-same man of the garden. Wait, could I be mistaken? This man's hair was gray, waving and jetty, the jaw-chin whiskers he possessed were of the same sad hue, whereas those of the other were as white as snow. Neither was this man's garments tattered, though they were close-fitting and elbow, from much wear. But no, I finally decided that there was no mistake. His smile betrayed him. On perceiving him, Mrs. Ballard threw back her head and laughed long and loud. He looked reproachfully at her and then detached gave place to anger, when she would not cease. Nothing more said, at length, she said, "I say excuse me, Mrs. Blackburn, this is my father. Father, addressing Well followed her to the ground floor, through the spacious hallway, past the parlor and library into a large airy apartment whose doors led directly into the garden. Mrs. Ballard greeted us in the same kindly manner of the previous evening. But sighing heavily, she said, "An invalid's life is indeed a dreary one, and I did not sleep well last night." Her sparkling eyes and blooming cheeks belied her words, but I extended my sympathies, for I knew she must be indulged in this whim of hers, for whom it surely was.

"I do wonder what is keeping father," she exclaimed, presently, "he is usually so punctual; you see," with a little smile, "although I am such an invalid, I have an excellent appetite."

At that moment a little old man entered the room, smiling and bowing most politely as he advanced to where we were. He did not seem an entire stranger. Ah, he was the self same man of the garden. Wait, could I be mistaken? This man's hair was heavy, waving and jetty, the few chin whiskers he possessed were of the same sable hue, whereas those of the other were as white as snow. Neither were this man's garments tattered, though they were glossy at knees and elbow, from much wear. But no, I finally decided that there was no mistake. His smile betrayed him. On perceiving him, Mrs. Ballard threw back her head and laughed long and loud. He looked reproachfully at her and then reproach gave place to anger, when she would not cease. Noting my surprise, at length she said, "Pray excuse me, Mrs. Blackburn, this is my father." "Father," addressing him, and pointing to my sister, "you may call this young lady Ulrica." There was a merry twinkle in her eye, at which I wondered.

"A lovely name, suited to the owner," he said in a highly pitched voice, as he bowed before my sister most gracefully.

She spoke a few kindly words to him, and believing as I did, that he was a dependant upon his daughter-in-law's bounty, gave him her sympathy at once. He was charmed and offered her his arm to lead her to table.

"Ulrica," said Mrs. Ballard quickly, striving to smother her laughter, "allow me to lean on you, I am so weak. I would ask father to assist me, but it would be a case of the blind leading the blind."

"I don't see why a man in the prime of life should be unable to assist you, Madam," he said darting an angry glance at his smiling daughter, as he stepped nimbly to his place at table. In a most embarrassing manner he riveted his gaze on my sister's lovely face, all during that breakfast hour.

Mrs. Ballard at length broke the spell by inquiring, "Father, when will Horace return?"

"In about two or three weeks," he answered shortly, looking crossly at her for interrupting his conversation with my sister.

"Who is Horace?" I ventured to inquire, as I had not heard his name mentioned before.

"He is my good-for-nothing spendthrift son," was the answer I received.

"Ah, I did not tell you of him last night, because any poor words of mine could not do him justice," cried Mrs. Ballard, her eyes kindling to positive anger, as she looked straight at the absent one's detractor, who excused himself abruptly and left the room. Evidently he entertained little good feeling toward his son.

"Sit here a little while, and I will tell you of Horace," said Mrs. Ballard, as I was about to rise also. Then began a description of such a paragon that I quaked inwardly at the prospect of living under the same roof with such a one.

"Oh, we are all lost when Horace is away," she declared with a doleful sigh, "but I believe he is about to close a deal on some silver mines in Nevada which he is overseeing and then he will remain at home."

"He supports his father?" I ventured to say.

"Indeed, his father's wealth can scarcely be estimated," she answered in surprise. And this woman, who had no family secrets proceeded in this wise: "Why, father has large interests in those mines which Horace is attending to. He also owns the large estate joining this. Almost the entire village belongs to him. In fact his income is a score time larger than my own, and yet he never gave Horace the advantages of an education; but put him to the plow, making him a common field hand, before he was twelve years of age. Through it all he has been a most dutiful son, and since my husband's death, has managed my estate, for which I pay him as large a salary as is practicable. And what do you suppose he does with it?" she cried, her eyes glowing in worshipful admiration.

"Indeed, I cannot even guess," I answered, smiling at her enthusiasm.

"He gives it all away, all, all," she declared. "Oh, there are many who rise up and call Horace Ballard blessed," she went on seriously.

"If you could just go through the old Manor house, which is on the next estate, you would learn more than I can tell you. Each room in that vast building is occupied by an oppressed, underpaid field hand and his family. They call Horace their guardian angel. Oh, but you should know him," she finally concluded, "my description of him will seem tame, indeed. There isn't a man, woman or child on either estate who could exist without him."

In my sister's eyes she found her enthusiasm reflected, and turning to her with a smile, said, "That

reminds me, Ulrica, part of your duties will be to look after my poor, and Horace's, too, till his return. Give me your arm, Ulrica," she said abruptly, "and I will try to walk to the school room, those stairs do tire me sorely."

After pausing to rest many times we at length reached our destination. Mrs. Ballard sank into an easy chair, seemingly exhausted.

"Now, Ulrica, I will hear you play," she said, pointing to the open piano.

After my sister had rendered with marvelous skill several selections asked for, she was delighted. "Why, I am indeed fortunate in securing such a gifted musician for my children's instructor," she said, "and I shall allow you to use your own judgment in teaching them. I fear their education has been sadly neglected and of music they have no knowledge whatever. Do the best you can with them and I shall be satisfied, and under no pretense must you neglect your own child," she added kindly.

For answer my sister crossed over to her and raised one plump, beringed hand to her lips.

"Oh no, Ulrica, you may kiss my cheek if you wish."

This my sister did, gladly, gratefully.

"Now Mrs. Blackburn, help me to my rooms," she said, "and we will have a good long talk. Indeed, of the two, I think your duties will be the more irksome," she added, "for you must listen to all I wish to say, you know, and I dearly love to talk."

Laughing gayly she took my arm, and we left my sister with her little pupils. It was thus we entered

upon our new duties, and each day seemed more pleasant than the preceding one. Swiftly, lightly indeed did those days pass by. There was none but bright faces and happy hearts around us, unless it was Mr. Ballard, who was a perpetual source of amusement to his daughter-in-law.

She made light of him on every possible occasion, which at times seemed almost cruel. In return she received black looks and angry retorts at which she always laughed the more.

A fortnight passed in this manner, when Mrs. Ballard commissioned my sister to drive over to the Manor House and fill out a deficit in the rent of one of the tenants. "There has been sickness in the family," she said, "and they may need funds. Father will eject them at once, if the exact amount is not forthcoming," she further explained, "he does business in a queer manner. For instance, instead of deducting the amount from their wages, he prefers to pay them in full, and then collect the rent. Very often they are in such sore need of medicines, or some other necessary, that the money is used, and then he has the added pleasure of ejecting them. Oh you cannot imagine how unbending he is," she concluded, "and while Horace is away, I look after them."

Needless to say it was a commission that gladdened my sister's heart.

"Can you manage horses, Ulrica?" she asked, as we were about to start. "If so I will order the ponies and carriage brought round and the children may accompany you."

At that moment Mr. Ballard came in and immediately offered his services as driver, not being aware of our destination.

"Indeed," spoke up Mrs. Ballard, "my children shall not risk being killed or maimed for life. You are unable to hold a two weeks old colt, father."

Giving her a wrathful glance, he stoutly declared, "A man in the prime of life should be able to manage any horse you have in your stables, madam."

"Ulrica need not go this morning," she said pointedly.

He trotted out of the breakfast room without dining.

"He often does that," she said smiling.

An hour later we ran down the steps and found the children already in the carriage, impatient to start. Soon we were speeding over the dusty roads toward the Manor House, on our mission of charity.

During our drive Nellie and Clara vied with each other in praise of Uncle Horace, whom they talked of incessantly. They seemed to have no interests or pleasures that did not include him. After I had listened some time to their loving reminiscences of one who filled their small hearts with such adoration, I said, "He must be a good Christian."

"Mamma says that he is better than a Christian," answered Clara. "He never does bad things and then prays and believes he is forgiven. He is always good," she declared proudly. The little ones begged to be driven down a by-road, and cross a little stream where we might view a lovely bit of scenery. After complying with their wish we paused a few minutes

to admire the cool, refreshing beauties of the woodland. Proceeding on our way at length, we turned a curve in the road and found ourselves in the dusty highway again, a little beyond our intended destination. A few steps in front of us was a rickety one-horse wagon, heavily laden with household goods and drawn by a poor emaciated old mule, that appeared to be too weak to stand under the weight of the harness. The driver, walking along side was swearing lustily and lashing it fiercely with a long whip.

My sister stopped the carriage instantly and sprang to the ground.

"Oh sir, I beg of you to stop," she cried, going up to the amazed driver and taking the whip from his hand. Leaning her pitying face against the poor brute's neck, her voice full of pain and tears, she cried, "Oh that such things must be."

The animal turned round its head with a pitiful look in its dull sunken eyes, and regarded her as if in wonder.

"Oh there is Uncle Horace," exclaimed both little girls at once, as a young man, dusty and travelworn came quickly up.

"How is this Henry?" he asked, in the kindest, deeply tender voice I had ever heard, as he took the bridle reins in his hand and patted the poor beast kindly. My sister raised her eyes to his face, those eyes that were bedewed with the tears of pity that were ever read to heal the woes of helpless and suffering creatures. She found an answering pity in the honest blue eyes that met her own with such a strangely tender light in their depths. In silence he

raised his hat to her, that tender light growing still deeper as he regarded her.

By this time Clara and Nellie were both clamoring for a kiss of greeting. Meanwhile Henry had stood completely abashed, tears of mortification standing in his eyes. Horace Ballard turned and took his hand with a kindly clasp and said, "Henry, I know it is not your fault that poor old Beck is starving. Tell me how it is."

"You see," the man began, "to-day is rent day and I was behind with the money. Your father come over early this morning, had me called from the field and demanded that I vacate at once. I knew how useless it would be to ask him to wait, so I thought if I could make it to the city by night, I might get to work right away. Old Beck has worked all summer with scarcely any feed. You see, I can't let my little ones cry for bread," he concluded desperately.

Horace Ballard shook his head sadly and began to unharness the old mule.

"We will have one of the ponies haul your goods back," he said, "I will do what I can for you, Henry."

The pony drew the load quickly back to the Manor House. While we waited for its return Horace Ballard came to the carriage and placed the little girls on the cushions.

"Nellie," he said smiling, "you must tell me who your new friends are. In all your letters you never mentioned a name."

"This is Mrs. Blackburn," she said, waving her small hand toward me, "and she is just Ulrica," pointing to my sister, "and this is her little girl Dorothy."

He noticed the child by a smile and pleasant word. Turning he looked at my sister, thoughtfully and said: "I heard your name once before. When I was quite small I helped a little girl to run away from an unkind guardian who—"

"It was I," she exclaimed, holding out her hand to him, a flash of gratitude lighting up her lovely face.

Taking her extended hand with pitying sympathy in his voice, he said: "You were cruelly placed for such a little child. I heard of you quite often, until your sister found you. I wrote to Isabel Horner and inquired about you, for I feared that you were not happy."

What was there about this man that caused one to forget himself completely when in his presence? What was there in his voice whose deep music seemed so compassionate, so helpful, so soothing, so uplifting? What was there about him that drew one's heart to him with such golden chords of devotion? Why was it that every eye glowed with a new light as it rested upon his bonny face? Handsome, yes. I then and there mentally declared him the handsomest man I had ever seen, although a casual observer might have noted but an ordinary, well proportioned young man, with close cropped brown hair, and pleasant face, with a tinge of melancholy in the thoughtful eyes. But when one heard the sound of his voice, or met the glance of the ever changing, serious eyes, they awoke to the fact that there was nothing ordinary about him. As Mrs. Ballard had said, no wonder that man, woman or child who had once known him, could scarcely exist without him.

Now that I had seen him, her description of him did indeed seem tame; and so is mine. What pen could paint the masterful personality of such a one, or that subtle, unseen influence which sprang from his own lofty soul, reaching out and encircling with compassionate love, each and every heart with which he came in contact.

Oh it was good to see how Horace Ballard was welcomed home by old and young alike. When we reached the Manor House they crowded out to shake hands with him; the children a perfect swarm of children, ran races to meet him; each one received a hand shake or a gentle pat on the head, and the little ones he raised in his arms and kissed.

One small boy, raised the cry, "Hurrah for Horace Ballard." Others took it up, tossing their caps high in the air with glee. He smiled and shook his head and there was silence in a moment.

One woman came to him with an infant in her arms and he praised it, touching gently its tender little hand.

An old man tottered out, and grasped his hand saying in a quavering voice, "Horace, boy, we're glad to have you home again."

"No more glad than I am to be among you," he answered. His own voice suspiciously near to tears.

My sister watched the welcoming home of this man with thoughtful, eager eyes.

While he went indoors to speak to a little child who was ill, we made friends with the little ones, who were not too shy to come to us.

Referring to my sister, one small boy, whispered,

"My, but she's a stunnin' beauty," another one agreed with him by a shake of the head and staring, admiring eyes.

"An' she's none of them critters what flaunts round in silks afore poor folks, nuther," whispered another.

"Course not," answered his companion, "she can't afford it, she's hired out to work for Mrs. Ballard, if such doin's as learning them girls how to read an' play on the piano can be called work."

"I don't believe she'd do it nohow, if she could," declared the first speaker.

Thus our characters and general appearances were discussed quite freely while we awaited Horace Ballard's return. But at length we found ourselves speeding toward home again, and he turned to me and inquired solicitously, "How is father? Does he seem quite well?"

"I never hear him complain," I answered, wondering greatly how he could show so much good feeling for the ill-conditioned old creature.

"I am glad to hear that," he said quickly, "I feared he was failing from the way Dora wrote."

When we reached home his welcome was as royal as it had been at that other place. The cook rushed from the kitchen, beflouring his hands with her own, at which he laughed and whitened her face in return. The gardener who was trimming and tying up the vines on the lower veranda, catching sight of him threw twine and shears to the ground and ran to greet him. Nannie came to give him her share of the welcoming home and he kissed the girl lightly on the forehead.

"I am going to tell mamma," cried Nellie, scampering off, but with a laugh he said, "I shall get there first," and sprang up the steps two at a time, after the child.

However, Mrs. Ballard had heard his voice in the hall, and came running from her room, and met him on the landing, her invalidism completely forgotten. She had her arms round his neck in an instant and cried, "Oh Horace, I never, never was so glad."

"Why Dora, I am surprised to find you so well," he exclaimed. "Where is my great invalid now?"

She flushed with chagrin as she saw me on the stairs. "It was the pleasure of seeing you, Horace, that gave me new life," she answered. "Indeed I can scarcely stand alone now."

"Oh yes, you can, Dora," he laughed, and giving her a little push, stepped back and left her standing unsupported, a perfect picture of health and strength.

I offered her my arm and assisted her back to her rooms, while Horace Ballard was dragged off to the school room between Clara and Nellie, to hear them play their first tune.

We met again at the dinner hour. Mr. Ballard came in the dining room promptly at one o'clock, trigged out in his best attire, with what he believed a most enticing smile in his weazened face. Horace Ballard gazed wonderingly at his father for a time, and then grasping his hand, cried, "Why, father, how well you are looking. I am indeed glad to find you so."

"Oh, you are back," was the only greeting he gave his son. Neither was there any welcome in look or

tone. "Why shouldn't a man in the prime of life look well?" he asked tartly, evidently displeased at the praise he had received.

"Did you attend to everything, positively everything?" he asked sharply.

"Everything settled satisfactorily, father, awaiting your signature," he answered. "I wired you to that effect. Did you not receive it?"

"Is it possible that you wasted money sending a telegram?" exclaimed the other angrily. "Let me see how much you have spent on this trip," he demanded.

"Here is an itemized account of my expenditures," handing his father a slip of paper.

The old man ran his eye rapidly down the column of figures and exclaimed angrily, "Here I find a large amount, fifty dollars of good hard cash, given to some beggar. Sir, how dare you give away another man's money in this manner?"

He was rapidly working himself into a passion when he saw my sister's surprised, shocked glance and he smothered his ire as best he could.

Horace Ballard's answer came in soft and pitying tones, "Father, had you but seen that poor widow, with her little baby, turned into the streets, you surely must have done as I did. We have so much, why not use some of it to—"

"We?" interrupted the old man, "we? What have you, pray? You give everything away to beggars that you can lay hands on."

Horace Ballard made no answer to this accusation. "Better than a Christian." How well the description suits him," I thought, as I watched his face all soft-

ened, his eyes luminous with pity as he recalled that picture of a homeless mother and her child.

Mr. Ballard turned his attentions to my sister. As we were about quitting the table he said in a commanding voice: "Horace, I want you to go over the place and oversee the building of that new fence this afternoon. I have all I can attend to in watching those lazy beggars in the north field."

Truly, here was a man who had no time to waste, though he was heir to munificent wealth.

CHAPTER XVII.

"I think that sunlit streams of magic powers
From secret wells within your being glide;
Such streams as rose when Gwydion gathered flowers
And made her Lleu a bride.

The strength that thrilled in Hermes' wand of old
Awakes again in you—a glow divine,
The gay broom blossoms has not half the gold
I see around your shine."

The troubled waters of my sister's life seemed calm at last. Her days were passed in a pleasant routine of duties and her face began to reflect the peace and happiness of those around us. The autumn came with its delightful changes and the winter months sped by; what a contrast were they to the snows and frosts of our eastern home. The month of February brought the beautiful garden flowers all out again in the glorious sunshine.

One lovely evening Mrs. Ballard was helped to my room and immediately settled herself in the easiest chair it contained. We were sitting near the open window which led to the veranda, enjoying the breeze which came from over the garden laden with the fragrant breath of the early spring blossoms. She was soon occupied in relating how Horace Ballard and his father had lived up to the time of her husband's death, when she had insisted that they take up their abode beneath her own roof.

"And can you believe it, Mrs. Blackburn, they occupied one scantily furnished room in the Manor House, taking their meals with one of the families there, and father actually complained that he must pay Horace's board, at the same time threatening to disinherit him if he did not stay at home and help manage the estate."

"I should judge that Horace"—yes, I had come to call him so long before—"was not one who would value the inheritance greatly," I suggested.

"Oh but he does," she answered, "he takes a broad view of the matter, and knows by being patient and keeping in the good graces of his father, he can in the future, the better serve some of the poor and needy, for that is his sole desire in life, and I do believe that when the fortune falls into his hand it will be used only for the benefit of others. Oh, there never was another like Horace," she declared, proudly. "I want you to see father's room to-morrow," she continued, laughing outright, as she mentally pictured it's interior. "It was nicely furnished when he first occupied it. One day he asked me if he could do as he liked with the contents. Believing he wished to arrange them differently I readily gave my permission."

"Can you believe it?" and she laughed again, "he sold every article in that room, even to the blinds, and kept the sum they brought. Oh I just want you to see what is in there now."

As she paused for breath we heard a footstep in the garden, which seemed to stop directly beneath my sister's window. Listening intently we soon heard the faint twang of a guitar and out on the night air

floated the highly pitched voice of Mr. Ballard, raised in would-be tuneful melody as he attempted to sing a love ditty, evidently of his own composition, as follows:

“O love, come out in the moonlight
Where the flowers are all abloom;
O love, come out in the moonlight,
Come out from that darkened room.

“Come out to one who is waiting,
In the dewy cool of the night:
Come out to one who is longing
To see thy eyes so bright.

“O, love, come out in the garden
Open thy lattice, lady sweet:
One word from thy red lips rosy,
And I’ll worship at thy feet.

“O, love, come out in the moonlight,
Glance from thy place above,
With starry eyes, dark and tender,
At one who you doth love.

“O love——”

But the exact length of his composition was never ascertained, for Mrs. Ballard fairly choking with pent-up mirth, suddenly cut it short by leaning far out my window and calling, “Oh father, I did not know you loved me so. Behold! Behold! my lattice is opened wide. I come! I come!”

Peal after peal of laughter rent the night air, so

joyous and hearty and so prolonged that I could not resist the temptation to join in. Needless to say, we heard no more songs from him. But the black looks we received the following morning at the breakfast table sent Mrs. Ballard into another paroxysm of laughter, at which he took fresh umbrage. That evening, my sister and Horace had gone to the observatory, which was fitted out with a fine telescope. Most of their evenings were passed there, for my sister at last had the longed-for opportunity to study the stars, and nowhere could a more proficient teacher be found than Horace Ballard, despite his few chances of gaining knowledge in his childhood. I had intended going with them, but Mrs. Ballard, who had no more regard for the proprieties than had my sister, declared that she would not be left alone, and she could never climb those stairs, and becoming tired of her own room had come to mine, so that was how it came to pass that we heard the love song; intended alone for my sister's ears.

After Mr. Ballard had marched angrily out of the breakfast room and we were alone, again, Mrs. Ballard asked me, "Do you remember the morning after your arrival, how I laughed when father came in with that horrible wig, and his whiskers blackened in that ridiculous manner."

"Oh yes, I remember quite well," I assured her.

"I knew he was in love then," she went on. "He must have caught a glimpse of Ulrica somewhere that morning."

"Indeed, I am very sorry," I said, "and Ulrica will be grieved should she ever find it out."

"Oh she will find it out," she declared with a little laugh. "Why he was so desperately in love with Maggie, the children's former governess, that he threatened to kill himself because she so openly shunned his advances. Before she left us he hated her, just as desperately as he had loved her, and one day he tore off his wig in her presence and declared that his love went with it. He allowed his little rim of snow white hair to straggle over his collar, and the more unkept and untidy his garments the more pleasure he seemed to take in his appearance. Oh believe me, the wearing of that wig means love," and the good woman laughed till the tears ran down her face.

At the first opportunity I informed my sister of what had occurred and also what Mrs. Ballard had said in regard to her father's infatuation for her.

"Why, Olive, the idea is preposterous," she exclaimed. "No doubt the poor old man, knowing I love music so well, thought to please me. Do you think it quite kind of Mrs. Ballard to make light of him so?"

"It may not be," I answered, "but he is certainly a ridiculous old creature."

"Well, well, dear, let us not enlarge upon his failings," she said.

"You had best be a little more distant with him," I warned her, as I turned to leave the room.

"I cannot see why I should alter my manner toward him in the least," she replied, "for I am positive that you are mistaken, dear."

I said no more. I knew she was doubly kind to him because almost every one on the place ridiculed him,

and so from his standpoint she encouraged his foolish hopes. As the days sped by he became her constant attendant. During her rides and walks, though always accompanied by the children, he was to be found at her side. He even neglected to watch his men at their work, a thing he was never guilty of before. Horace was gone from early morning until the supper hour, overseeing the two estates. Mrs. Ballard was delighted at the turn affairs had taken, for it afforded her amusement, she often said, during her trying days of invalidism.

One bright Sabbath morning she and I were still tarrying in the breakfast room, after the others had gone, when, glancing through the open door, she espied Mr. Ballard walking in the garden. Laughing gaily she pointed to him, and I could not refrain from smiling at his ridiculous attire. Surely, Solomon in all his glory, was never arrayed in more striking habiliments. Imagine a tottering old man of eighty with a smirking smile on his weazened face, beneath his thin straggling jet black whiskers a scarlet four-in-hand, a befrilled shirt front, pantaloons of the brightest lavender hue, much too short and close fitting, no doubt a bargain had been gained in their purchase, a swallow-tailed coat reaching almost to his knees, standing hat in hand, bowing and gazing up at my sister's window with his hand pressed to his heart.

"Be sure you keep your valuables safely hidden," cried Mrs. Ballard, between her bursts of merriment, "for father will make up this outlay at some other's expense."

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I was shocked at the imputation that he would stoop to thieving.

As we still gazed and admired a little gust of wind fluttered the old man's waving locks a moment, and then, tearing them completely from their resting place, left his shining head revealed to the morning sunlight. Mrs. Ballard, at this, gave full vent to her merriment in screams of laughter, that could be heard to the uttermost confines of the garden. Glancing quickly at the open doors of the breakfast room and perceiving us, he darted behind a tall, foliage plant which completely hid him from view whilst the wind played pranks with his raven locks at the other side of the garden.

"Oh, I hope Ulrica saw him," gasped Mrs. Ballard between paroxysms of laughter.

The children were also in the garden and rescued the delinquent wig from a thorn bush.

"I've got it, I've got it, grandpa," cried Nellie, triumphantly running up. However, they soon came trooping to the breakfast room, Nellie looking a little crestfallen.

"Mamma," she said, "he told me to never call him grandpa any more, and that a man in the prime of life didn't like to be addressed in that absurd fashion."

"Call him Blossom, Nellie, that will be sure to please him," said her mother.

Ah, could I but have looked into the future and known the horror that was to spring from that old man's infatuation, I should not have been so mirthful and light of heart on those bright days. I was light of heart, indeed, for I believed I saw a smooth and shin-

ing path for my darling's thorn-pierced feet to travel. I had discerned a secret that was yet not a secret. I could not mistake the quick, glad light that ever flashed to Horace Ballard's eyes when they rested upon her. I watched for some answering sign on her quiet face, but in that I was disappointed, although I knew she held him very dear, as she had often told me. One day I asked her directly if she had promised to become his wife. She looked at me in amazement and laughed outright.

"Why Olive, you would have every one on the place in love with me. First Mr. Ballard, who has never dreamed of such a thing, and now it is Horace. Who will the next one be, perhaps—"

"Yet, Ulrica," I interrupted, "only last night I saw you walking in the garden with him, and when you paused a moment to pluck a flower, he smoothed back your curls and kissed you. Do you think you should permit such careeses?"

"Oh but Olive, do I not permit you and Dorothy to hold my hands, and smooth back my hair and kiss me? Does he not kiss Mrs. Ballard and the children?" It is quite the same thing," she said, positively.

"It may be to you, Ulrica," I expostulated, "but you must consider him; he is too noble to be led on by false hopes. You have no right to tempt a man so."

"Oh these earth tied ones, will they never understand?" she exclaimed, ruefully, while a light beautiful to see flashed in her eyes, as she resumed. "Horace knows me better than you ever will, Olive; he is not a lover; he is a friend."

"Is he a Christian, Ulrica?" I asked, inwardly praying that the answer would be yes."

"He is better than a Christian," she said softly.

I looked at her and understood. She had found one who also held her own strange beliefs, and in her unbounded joy forgot that he was a man. I sighed wearily and said no more, for did she not ever out-argue me, on the question of religion?

I was and am still a very Worldly Christian, but what was she? Never an infidel, nor yet an agnostic, for she possessed decided views and her religious ecstasies soared to heights which mine were incapable of reaching. Yet was she a faithful follower of the man of tears, in all things that were plain to her understanding. The mysteries she would not accept as such, but set herself the task of unraveling. Ah, she was indeed ever a mystery to me.

Her walks in the garden with Horace did not cease, and when I again expostulated with her for thus encouraging his hopes for I could read him aright, though she could not, she said. "Now, dear, why will you persist in troubling your head about us? If you knew the comfort and help I derive from this companionship, you would not raise a single objection. Besides," she resumed, "I am carrying on my studies in astronomy. Rest assured that no harm to any one can possibly come of it. Remember that Horace is my friend. Why he is next in my heart to you and Dorothy and—"

She paused suddenly. I did not need to ask why, as I saw the burning flush that swept her face.

It was a bitter disappointment to know that her

heart still clung to that worthless one, but I consoled myself with the knowledge that change is the law of time, so I let them alone thereafter and fate marched boldly on and did with them as she chose.

My sister's salary all went for the needs of some poor families in the city, of whom Horace had told her. In fact the price of her own and Dorothy's clothing was paid from my own purse. All my expostulations were in vain, for ever would she paint in such glowing language the sufferings of some little child or aged person that must be relieved, that I knew my interference was useless.

Oh, what a contrast was there between us? Mrs. Ballard often sent us to the city on shopping expeditions and while I selected the rich silks and laces that I was commissioned to purchase, my sister went about delicately proffering aid to the needy, giving freely her mite and what is oft times more valued, her ready sympathy and cheering, helpful advice. So it was that our views on all matters presented just as great a contrast as our acts, though I was forced to acknowledge that hers were ever the best, for they were devoid of all worldly vanity. She recognized but the goodly instinct of human nature. I the ones that made war with them.

CHAPTER XIX.

“Man’s bliss comes never to him from without,
The rich man buys his pleasures all for naught;
Love fills the soul and keeps it full of help
For others; sweet refreshment to itself,
The good man has life’s fountain in himself.”

Swiftly the days and weeks sped by. It was now the middle of March and Horace was spending several days in the city attending to some business for Mrs. Ballard. One evening my sister and I repaired to the garden and stood silently enjoying the beauties of our surroundings, when we were startled by a creeping step quite near us. Instantly my thoughts flew to Mark Warren, for I still feared him. But no, it was Mr. Ballard who passed without perceiving us. With stealthy steps he entered the summer house close by, holding in his hand a small box. He seemed to be searching for something a moment and then began to displace the earth. My sister enjoined me to silence by placing her hand on my arm. Soon we heard the chink of coins as he emptied the contents of his box into the one already buried.

“No music so sweet as this, none, none,” he muttered, as he picked up a handful of the coins several times, letting them fall back again.

“A miser worshipping his gold,” I mentally ejaculated. “How disgusting.”

Chuckling gleefully he closed the lid and raked the loosened earth over the box again. Lighting several

matches in order to see how to cover all traces of the secret hiding place of his gold, he then left the spot and repaired to another part of the garden.

"He must have another gold mine," I said, after he had disappeared. "How horrible."

"Poor old man," said my sister sadly. "How little that is good he experiences in life."

"He scarcely deserves pity, Ulrica," I said somewhat testily.

"He deserves pity as surely as the veriest beggar who has but the pavement for pillow, Olive," was her answer.

After a time we climbed the little flight of steps that led to the veranda above, and found Mrs. Ballard awaiting us in my room. She had come to discuss her plans for the entertainment of her guests whom she expected to arrive the following evening.

"We must have a general good time," she declared gaily. "Ulrica, you may put aside the children's lessons until their departure."

"There will be Mrs. Horner and her two daughters, Isabel and Grace; my mother's old schoolmate, Mrs. Woodson, and her son; Mrs. Hendricks, a charming young widow, also her brother and a friend promised to run up for a few days from the city.

"I am such an invalid," she continued ruefully, turning to me, "that I cannot go out much, so I shall depend upon you and Ulrica to assist me in entertaining my friends."

We agreed to do our best and planned each day's programme for the house party before she left us. The following morning during breakfast she was

again discussing the arrangements. Looking shyly at Mr. Ballard she said, in regretful tones, "If I had only been so fortunate as to secure Ralph Hampton our party would have been complete. I want you to meet him, Ulrica, he is so interesting and amusing. Young, rich and handsome, he is one to—"

Mr. Ballard darted an angry glance at her, and savagely interrupted her saying, "I can escort Ulrica, and amuse her, too. A man in the prime of life should be able to amuse anyone."

"I have no doubt that you will amuse every one who sees you, father," she answered, with a little laugh.

He scowled darkly at her, but said nothing.

We busied ourselves all morning in giving the guests' rooms and the parlors the finishing grace that flowers alone can lend.

"I want red roses for Isabel," said Mrs. Ballard as we were completing the arrangements of the sumptuous apartments allotted to Miss Horner's use, "for she always reminds me of a blood red rose."

"You must fight for your laurels, Ulrica," she cried gaily, "for Isabel is a stunning beauty. I want you to wear black tonight, with yellow roses. You always look so imposing in black."

My sister smilingly assured her that it should be as she wished.

Ah, kind and generous hearted friend, sharing with us so freely, the delights of her beautiful home. We, who had known the pangs of unappeased hunger and the woes of utter destitution, were treated as be-

loved sisters by this tenderly nurtured daughter of wealth.

The carriages were dispatched to the village and in due time returned with the guests, whom I assisted Mrs. Ballard to receive. Mrs. Hendricks came first, a small, vivacious fair haired woman, who reminded me of Alice Ashley. Mrs. Horner and her daughter greeted their hostess effusively. Grace, a shy young girl spoke in a friendly voice to me, but neither her mother nor sister deigned to notice me ever so slightly. A dear white haired old lady, Mrs. Woodson, came more slowly up the steps, leaning on her son's arm. Kissing Mrs. Ballard's cheek she introduced the young man who glanced with admiring eyes at his hostess' rosy face. Captain Woodson was tall and distinguished in appearance, with a soldierly bearing, a pleasant face and kind voice.

Mrs. Ballard gave me permission to show Mrs. Woodson to the rooms prepared for her use. I was charmed by the kindness of her manner to me, but a paid companion as I was, and during the days that followed could not refrain from contrasting her with Mr. Ballard. She proved how delightful old age can be, he, how disagreeable and absurd.

Later we all assembled in the dining room, except my sister, who begged Mrs. Ballard to excuse her, as Nellie was not well and desired her presence. Mrs. Ballard had given the desired permission to absent herself, with the proviso that she came to the parlor during the evening and play for us.

I noted with amazement, the insolent beauty of Miss Horner, as she entered the room that evening,

magnificent in pale rose tinted silk, shrouded in festoons of foamy lace half revealing the beautifully curved throat and shapely arms. For ornament a single red rose, which did not outrival the full scarlet lips in hue. The rose tints on the rounded cheek were but little less pronounced. As the light fell on her shining braids, it reminded me of red lights flung full on a bazen shield. "A magnificent animal," I mentally ejaculated, "but untamed."

There was no charm of manner there, but a proud haughtiness that ill became her. Passing me by as though I were an inanimate object she sank gracefully on the settee by Mrs. Ballard's side.

"Horace is surely at home?" she said, inquiringly, raising the most beautiful pair of blue eyes I had ever beheld, to Mrs. Ballard's face.

"No, he is in the city," she answered, "but you may be sure it was very important business that took him away at this time," smiling at the girl whose color deepened at thought of the hidden meaning those words conveyed.

A sharp pain of jealousy pierced my heart. Perhaps after all, I was mistaken and Horace Ballard's attachment for my sister was only friendship. Why, the bare suspicion that he might love this proud, beautiful girl served to make me most wretched.

Soon Mr. Ballard came trotting in and not perceiving my sister, inquired for her.

"Of whom was he speaking?" asked Miss Horner.

"Mrs. Blackburn's sister," answered Mrs. Ballard, "and she is the sweetest girl in the world, Isabel, and quite as handsome as you."

The good woman smiled mischievously at the proud beauty's scornful face.

Captain Woodson had eyes for no one save his hostess, and a charming hostess she was indeed, in her black and white evening gown, with diamonds in her pretty brown hair, at her throat and on the plump white arm. "Invalid indeed," I thought, smiling to myself. Why she almost vied with Miss Horner in robustness and rich coloring of cheek and lip.

Soon after we repaired to the parlors, Mrs. Ballard requested me to go in search of my sister. As I rose to do her bidding Mr. Ballard also rose and declared his intention of fetching her himself. All during the evening he had been silent and morose, scarcely speaking to any one. In fact, he had almost ceased to exist while out of my sister's presence. He had become an object of pity to me. He followed her about the house and grounds in a dog-like manner. He spent his mornings in the school room, and had her teach him music for the sole purpose of being near her. He even made her presents of cheap little trinkets, such as hair ornaments and lace pins, which she accepted through kindness, and his delight was unbounded, when she decked herself with one of them. Mrs. Ballard watched the affair progress with increasing interest, finding in it much cause for merriment. Still my sister refused to believe it was other than friendship which the old man felt for her.

What kept him from declaring his passion, I did not know, unless he was undecided as to how she would receive such a declaration. Yet his self-esteem was as prodigious as it was amazing.

After a short lapse of time my sister made her appearance, Mr. Ballard close behind her, smiling delightedly. She had arrayed herself as Mrs. Ballard had requested her; and I was proud, worldly proud of my beautiful sister as she advanced to Mrs. Ballard's side, with a grace which no society queen could ever acquire, for she possessed that sweet humility which garlands pride, even as a festoon of swaying, clinging vines, lent untold grace to the upright unbending oak. She always shone like a star in any society, low or high. Isabel Horner's brazen beauty was eclipsed, and she knew it, as my sister stood beside her, her sweet face alight with friendly feeling, as she acknowledged their introduction.

In that moment I knew that Isabel Horner hated my sister, hated her because she possessed that subtle charm which drew all hearts to her; that charm which was born of the greatness of her soul, and which she herself lacked entirely. It was indeed that charm which finds its grave in selfishness and can only spring to life and be nurtured to maturity by utter self abnegation. That charm was indeed, flourishing with tropical luxuriance in my sister's breast. So great had its growth become that it pervaded her whole being and her very presence was a joy to those around her, as great a joy as an oasis in a sandy desert to the suffering sun-scorched traveler toiling across its trackless waste.

After a few moments of conversation Mrs. Ballard said,

"Ulrica, we must have some music. Let us hear

that beautiful sonata of Beethoven's that I think so grand."

Captain Woodson hastily arose, proffering his services in turning the music sheets. But Mr. Ballard also rose and waved him back, looking at the surprised young man angrily, as he cried peremptorily, "I can wait upon her, sir."

"Captain Woodson, I beg of you to render your services; father cannot see very well," came Mrs. Ballard's voice, suppressed laughter in its tones.

"I don't see why a man in the prime of life shouldn't see well, madam," answered the old man transferring his anger to her, and glancing darkly in her direction.

Miss Horner smiled sneeringly as she watched my sister's unconscious face, as she seemed lost to outward events in the rendering of the divine music that was thrilling and holding captive its hearers. With her quick insight into worldly ways no doubt she read at a glance the old man's infatuation. Indeed, all who ran might read the truth in his eyes as he stood near, gazing into my sister's face. All might read save the one most interested. Once, happening to glance up, she smiled kindly at him. Miss Horner looked curiously, maliciously at her, on seeing this.

Mrs. Ballard called, "Now, Ulrica, that song I heard you sing once, 'The Deserted Wife.'"

Striking a few wandering chords her sweet voice rose and filled the room with melody. There seemed a tear in every note as she sang these lines:

"Love me, Ah no, he never loved me,

Else he'd sooner died than stain,
One so fond as he had proved me,
With the hollow world's disdain."

When she ceased there was a silence so deep it could almost be felt; but that silence was broken by the highly pitched voice of Mr. Ballard, as he said, reassuringly, "You needn't look so sad, Ulrica, you shall never be deserted."

Mrs. Ballard's rippling laughter rang out clear and unchecked, while the old man glowered upon her defiantly from his station at the piano. The others smiled and understood, all save my sister who was unaccountably stupid. I was sorely vexed.

"Ulrica, that will do," cried Mrs. Ballard, after her mirth had subsided somewhat, "we will allow father to entertain us now."

My sister left the piano and going to Mrs. Woodson's side they fell into pleasant conversation. Miss Horner excused herself to her hostess at an early hour, and nodding slightly to the others, excepting my sister and myself, whom she did not deign to notice, walked haughtily from the room. The word untamed rang in my ears as I watched her. But how was I to guess how utterly untamed at that early day? Several days passed. Mrs. Hendrick's brother ran up for a few days from the city, bringing with him a friend who had been almost dying to meet the little widow, at least she had confided as much to Mrs. Ballard and myself.

Miss Horner remained in her room almost continually during this time, taking but little interest in any-

thing during Horace's absence. However, she allowed no opportunity to slight my sister or myself pass by unimproved. On one occasion she was passing the school room which was slightly ajar. Hearing Grace's voice within, she pushed the door open, and standing on the threshold said scornfully, "Grace, you should remember that servants have their daily occupations, and you should not interfere with them."

Dorothy who was near by, grasped the meaning of these words and instantly spoke up, her eyes flashing, "My mamma and auntie are not servants, I'll let you know."

"Miss impudence," said the young lady, giving the child a wicked look as she passed on.

My sister gently chided her child for this exhibition of temper and said: "Dorothy, always speak kindly and be patient. When you are older, you will learn that we are all servants."

Such scenes never touched my sister although they filled me with burning rage. And while I felt that only small natures were stung by such trifles, I was utterly incapable of raising myself to a height where they could not reach.

Mrs. Ballard had sent out invitations to the neighboring gentry for a dinner party to be followed by dancing.

"It will not be a ball, exactly," she exclaimed to me, "for I have scarcely discarded my mourning yet."

Horace was expected home the night of the dinner party it having been purposely arranged for his home coming.

The spacious ball room was thrown open and decked profusely with blossoms. Great baskets full of garden beauties had been cut and woven into fairy chains, which were hung in graceful festoons reaching from windows to doorways, filling the air with sweetness. This scene was brilliantly lit up by the many points of flame, from the three great chandeliers which were also most beautifully decorated with clusters of many hued roses, and daisy chains reaching from one to the other, crossed and recrossed until the ceiling seemed a bed of bloom. To me, who had never before beheld such decorations, it was a veritable fairy palace.

I would take no active part in the evening programme, because of my religious views, but I knew that my sister would, for Mrs. Ballard had insisted that she should join the children in their dancing lessons, which they took twice weekly at the village, declaring that they would take more interest if she attempted the steps also. Most kindly she made my sister a present of a ball gown for this occasion. Dorothy and I had chosen a pale lilac tinted satin, almost shrouded in black lace, just such a gown as the child had wished her mother to possess in that past time, when she had put the price to such a different use. Now Dorothy's wish was fulfilled and she was wild with delight as she stood contemplating the beautiful picture her mother made when clad in its shining folds.

Viewing herself in the long length mirror in the hallway before descending, she said half sadly,

"Think what the price of such a gown did once, and this is all so useless and unnecessary."

Mr. Ballard, passing at that moment, overheard her words and paused. "Quite right, my dear," he declared, "quite right—a useless expenditure of gold it is, these yards and yards of material that women drag after them."

Looking at the lengthy train of her gown he declared it was shameful. It was rank foolishness, it was heart breaking to see such wanton waste. "Why I'd rather see a heap of good yellow gold any day," he declared, rubbing his skinny hands together."

"But I want the gold to give away," she answered

"Oh, that's worse than foolishness," he exclaimed, his eyes twinkling avariciously. "Save it, save it, always save it."

I turned shudderingly away, as a picture of the miser worshipping his gold arose before me.

I hastened to Mrs. Ballard's room, intending to assist her in preparing to receive her guests. I found her in despair, for her toilet was all complete except donning her ball gown, a white silk, which had been finished with a detachable train and this train was now in the land of the missing. Every available place had been searched but without success. Nannie was shedding tears over the loss.

"There is positively nothing else that I can wear," declared Mrs. Ballard ruefully, tears of vexation dimming her pretty brown eyes.

"I must wear white or go back to this everlasting black, and that I will not do tonight," stamping her foot impatiently.

She donned her abbreviated skirt and viewed herself in the mirror.

"How absurd I look," she cried. "A train makes one appear inches taller, and there is Isabel and Ulrica, yes, and even you, are all so beautifully tall. It will never do," she cried, decisively, by this time the tears flowed freely. An idea came to me on the instant.

"I will suggest something if you will not be angry," I began, but hesitated.

"Go on," she cried, "nothing will make me angry if I only find my train."

Hurriedly I repeated the conversation which my sister and I just had with Mr. Ballard.

"I might have known the old curmudgeon had my train," she cried, her eyes sparkling with blended hope and anger.

Quite forgetting her invalidism, she slipped on a dressing gown and led the way to Mr. Ballard's room. Luckily the door was unbolted. I assisted her in her search. Between the mattresses on his little iron bedstead, reposed the missing article, nicely folded; but not alone, for there were other valuables there. Yards of costly lace and ribbons and even a ring that belonged to Miss Horner. She had mentioned the loss the previous day, but finally decided that it had slipped from her finger unperceived, whilst she was in the garden. Mrs. Ballard gathered the stolen articles up in her arms and danced gleefully about the room, laughing merrily.

"Oh, but I'll have my revenge on him for this," she declared, as she paused for breath. She noted my

look of surprise, for never did invalid step so swiftly or lightly. Looking straight at me she smiled and said meaningly, "There's no use in being sick, is there?"

Returning her smile, I answered "No," and there ended all her attempts at invalidism.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
How with this rage, shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?"

That night Captain Woodson led Mrs. Ballard in to dinner and later opened the ball with her. Having thrown her invalidism to the winds, she was now the gayest of the gay. Isabel Horner was magnificent in violet velvet, the low cut bodice revealing the beautifully carved throat in all its perfection, round which was clasped a necklace of brillants, gleaming like little points of flame. A tiara of the same precious gems flashed from the red gold hair. Fastened in the creamy lace which draped her bodice were pink La France roses, lending a sweet grace to the perfect vision. A princess royal could not have borne herself more loftily. A proud beautiful statue she was indeed, selfishness written on every lineament of the perfectly carved features, marring all their grace, taking away their living beauty, leaving naught but a cold, repellant exterior. For, though one may admire a marble statue, a human being so constituted becomes an object most repelling.

It was with a sense of relief that I turned from the contemplation of this cold beauty to my sister, whose wonderfully speaking eyes lit up her face with a beauty that outrivalled any glittering gems. A spray of heliotrope was fastened in the shining wealth of her

midnight hair, in lieu of jewels. As she stood a little apart, viewing the brilliant scene, with unseeing eyes, I knew that could she have followed her thoughts she would be at the bedside of some ill and suffering one, allaying pain with her gentle touch, whispering words of cheer to the drooping spirit. Later in the evening she and I were standing near the open door which led to the veranda. Several guests were near and Mrs. Ballard had just come up with Captain Woodson. Isabel Horner was also near. She had been casting furious glances at my sister during the evening; evidently it did not add to her good humor to be rivaled, and her venomous tongue could not be kept longer from emitting a portion of its poison.

Gazing meditatively at my sister she said, "Somehow I feel assured that we have met before I came here, and that I have heard your name or seen it somewhere. Oh, yes," she resumed carelessly, as though just remembering, "you resemble Grace's nurse maid whom we employed while residing in New York."

"I am the same," said my sister, looking at her with the smile which was habitual with her.

"How is it that you have never mentioned the fact before?" asked the other sneeringly.

"I did not think you wished to know me," answered my sister.

Cuttingly came the insulting words.

"No, one does not usually wish to renew the acquaintance of a discarded servant, especially when she practices deception of bearing a false name. You called yourself Mary in those days, did you not, until

this person," glancing at me, "came and claimed you?"

"I did, for the best of reasons," answered my sister, looking sadly at her questioner, as the memory of her lonely childhood rose before her.

Clear and distinct came Mrs. Ballard's voice, "Isabel, Mrs. Blackburn and her sister are my valued friends. Moreover, it is an honor to lead a useful life. They must be accorded unbiased respect while beneath my roof." Her eyes were fairly snapping with just anger.

"Indeed," sneered the other, as she moved away.

"Why, Dora, what an exhibition of temper," exclaimed a voice that I knew and loved, and as I turned toward the veranda from whence proceeded that voice, Horace Ballard caught my outstretched hand, as he kissed Mrs. Ballard's flushed cheek.

My sister had turned away to speak with Mrs. Woodson, who had enjoyed Isabel Horner's discomfiture immensely, and so did not see him.

"Why are you so late, Horace?" asked Mrs. Ballard.

"I was delayed unavoidably and so missed my train," he answered. "But I must leave you now," he declared lightly, "and make myself presentable for this brilliant affair."

During the minutes that followed I had ample time to ponder upon the young lady's words and their veiled meaning. What did they imply? She had heard or seen my sister's name and there was a cruel triumphant light in her eyes as she emphasized that word seen. Was my sister's supposed disgrace des-

tined to follow us to this distant land, and crush her? No, crush her it never could, but we might lose our newly found friends by the exposure, I told myself in dismay.

I looked across the room at my sister's calm face, on which rested no sign of uneasiness, no sign whatever that she had interpreted the girl's venomous words. Then I remembered the kind generosity of the good woman who had so befriended us and knew that I had done her an injustice in doubting for a moment her leniency in judgment, should the whole truthful circumstances be explained to her. Then I thought of Horace, with that little sharp pain of jealousy tugging at my heart. What if it were true, after all, that his best affections were placed upon that beautiful demon, whom I knew to be so unworthy of any good man's love, and doubly so of one like him? With all these reflections crowding upon me, I was quite miserable. But later, as Horace Ballard entered the room and his glance rested upon my sister, my misgivings vanished, and a joyous certainty dwelt where their abode had been. In a moment he was at her side. His secret—no—why should his honest love be a secret,—written plainly on his happy face and in his kindling eyes.

Isabel Horner saw and also understood. In that moment even I pitied the girl, as I noted the deadly whiteness of her face as she so surely read his love for another. I also believed that she was prepared for it, that she had suspected it all along, else, why was her enmity for my sister so pronounced from the first?

Horace Ballard was not one of the world's celebrities, yet a stranger just stepping into that room must surely have believed him one, seeing with what eagerness the guests crowded about him, grasping his hand and looking with friendly eyes upon him, and voicing still more friendly greetings. A friend indeed, was he to the high or low alike.

"Where is father?" he inquired of Mrs. Ballard, as she paused a moment by my sister's chair.

"Why I frightened him away hours ago, with my train," she said, laughing and glancing at me.

"I don't see how such a pretty one could frighten any one," he declared, looking admiringly at the sweeping folds of glistening silk.

"You shall be let into the secret then," and still smiling she stepped aside with him and proceeded to give him an account of the circumstance that was losing his father the joys of the ball room.

He shook his head sadly, meditatively, as she left him. Coming back to us, he looked after her and said, "What a mischievous creature she is, but so good. I am glad she has thrown aside that foolish whim of hers for she is worth half a dozen of either you or Ulrica, in physical strength."

I smiled at him but made no comment.

"Horace, you have not seen Miss Horner yet, and she is looking this way," said my sister, kindly remembering her enemy.

He crossed over to where she stood, plucking to pieces one of the exquisite pink roses which adorned her bodice. Pale they grew beside the deep glow that mounted to cheek and brow on his approach. As

he took her hand in friendly greeting she stood silent with downcast eyes. I marveled at the change in her. Could this lovely softened girl be the vindictive creature of an hour ago? Her blue eyes were luminous with a beautiful chastened light. Her very figure had lost its haughty bearing. A tenderness that I had not deemed her capable of pervaded her whole being. The proud, beautiful statue had been suddenly endowed with life. She had a heart, poor girl, and Horace Ballard alone had the power to wake it from its lethargy. Oh, could I but have seen such a transformation in my sister at this man's approach, how my heart would have stirred with very gladness. But never was her cool calm ruffled at sight of him. Never was there aught save frank friendliness in her steady, open glance.

After a time Mrs. Ballard came to me with the request that I go to her rooms and fetch a kerchief, as she had misplaced hers. As I passed Mr. Ballard's room on the upper landing he peered cautiously out from behind the door, which was slightly ajar; but perceiving me, quickly darted back, closed and bolted it. I wondered at this and stepped into my own room, which was almost opposite, and presently I heard a knock on his door.

"It is I, father," called Horace.

The door was unbolted and cautiously opened. My conscience did not trouble me in the least as I stood and listened, for I was curious to know what had been Mrs. Ballard's revenge. Evidently it had been swift and sure.

"Father, why do you not come down and enjoy yourself?" asked Horace cheerily.

"I could not catch all the old man's words, but his voice rose as he proceeded, also his anger.

"She declares that if I poke my head in that ball room tonight she will put me to open shame before all the guests for what I have done. Oh, I hate her!" he cried, his voice still rising. "Oh, how I hate her. And that meddlesome minx, Mrs. Blackburn, too; it was through her that I was found out, I know it was."

"But, father, what induced you to ever do such a thing?" exclaimed Horace.

As for myself I was brimming over with merriment at the ridiculous position in which the old man found himself. I knew that the strains of gay music which came stealing up the stairway and through the hall were distractingly tempting to him; that he longed to be in the midst of the merry throng below; the gayest of the gay."

"It's all your fault," was the angry answer Horace received. "You young rascal, I thought that by selling those useless cursed article I might get a part of the money back that you threw right and left on that trip last summer. Money that wasn't yours," he fairly shrieked, "how dared you?"

By dint of much patient coaxing and kindly assurances that Mrs. Ballard would not mention his act to any one, Horace finally induced him to go down.

"But the jade will tell Ulrica," he declared, "I wouldn't have Ulrica know it for the world."

At this he broke completely down and sobbed out

his wrath like a young child. But soon they descended the stairs arm in arm.

I reached the ball room by another entrance almost as soon as they. Making my way toward Mrs. Ballard, I saw her nod to Horace as he looked at her and smilingly shook his head. But the temptation to annoy the old man was irresistible and as he passed her, looking in every direction for my sister, she vacated her chair immediately and said quite loudly, "Father, I fear you are weary after such prolonged merriment. Will you not take my chair and rest a few moments?"

A glance of unholy wrath was all the answer she received as he teetered by, bent on finding the object of his search as speedily as possible. Her amused laugh followed him. Neither did he speak to a single guest, though he must have been intimate with each and every one; but now he passed them by as though they were utter strangers. A smile overspread his wrinkled countenance as his eyes finally rested upon my sister, and he grasped her hand as though he had not seen her for years. She seemed a little surprised at his behavior but smiled kindly as she made room for him beside her. A little later when Horace came to claim her for a waltz he looked so darkly at him that I half rose in alarm. Oh, how little did any one know the sad termination there would be to this foolish infatuation.

After he had finished the dance they paused quite near me, and Horace said beseechingly, "Ulrica, come out on the veranda a few moments; I have scarcely spoken a word to you yet."

When they were out amid the rustling leaves and sweet honeysuckle blooms, whose fragrance came stealing through the long, low windows where I sat, he took her hands in his, and in tones trembling with holy love, said, "Ulrica, have you missed me?"

"Indeed, I have, Horace," she answered, "I do so long for our nights among the stars again."

"Yes, you have missed our nights among the stars, Ulrica," a little disappointment creeping into his voice, "but have you missed me?"

"Certainly I have," she answered him. "Indeed, Horace, I scarcely know how I could get along without you."

"Then I am most blest," he said softly, smoothing back her curls with loving touch and she so blind, so blind!

Indeed her next words proved how far were her thoughts from self or his love for her. "Did you find those poor families of whom I told you?" she inquired.

"Yes, every one; that was how I came to miss my train tonight; I was with one of them," he answered, "and they are situated worse, much worse than was represented to us."

His voice grew pityingly tender, as he described their surroundings.

"If I had a sack of gold I should take it to them," he said. "However, I was able to temporarily relieve their wants."

My sister glanced in at the brilliant scene, which the interior of the ball room presented, and with sad pain in her voice cried, "Oh, Horace, when will come

the time when such useless expenditures of wealth cease? How can any one be merry amid such scenes, while there is one suffering creature in the whole wide world?" Her voice broke with a sob.

"Nay, dry your tears dear," he said. "Curb your loving impatience for that great and glad time when all humanity will have but one aim. Strive to be content and know that all is well. These things must be, for a time. But know also that the time will surely come when mankind will crave for naught save the riches of the soul."

"You always comfort me, Horace," she said smiling through her tears, "but sometimes the knowledge of it all becomes too great a burden, and I almost faint by the wayside."

"Yes, and so did I, dear, until I gained strength from that blessed assurance that 'He doeth all things well,' " he said gravely.

When she left him a few moments later he looked after her and said softly, "Oh, my dear, dear love!"

Unobserved, I sat quite still for some time, vainly striving to pierce the veil of futurity as many others seek to do, only to find in the end how useless is the expenditure of thought and strength.

Mr. Ballard claimed my sister's attention the remainder of the evening, making himself as ridiculous as he alone knew how, causing many smiles of ridicule, many significant glances to be exchanged, while she, in her utter unconsciousness of the old man's infatuation, treated him with marked kindness, because of his extreme age.

The following days were passed in a round of

pleasure. An excursion on horseback to view some mountain scenery had been planned for the fourth day after the ball. That morning as we were assembled at the breakfast table Mrs. Ballard said, "I fear that I haven't the right number of mounts in my stables," counting on her pretty fingers and calling by name her saddle animals. "Minus one," she concluded. "Horace, you must send to the corrals for Black Dock. He is my favorite, but will be very gay after his long rest, so I shall not try him today. Who will?" and she looked around at us.

"I," said Miss Horner quickly.

"You may," readily agreed Mrs. Ballard. "You would be safe on a steed suitable for the very master of Haydes," she concluded with a nod and laugh.

The horses were brought round, ready for the start, at nine o'clock. Captain Woodson stood waiting to offer his services to my sister and Miss Horner, who had not yet appeared. The others, including myself, were mounted and waiting, when Mr. Ballard came trotting out and gesticulating wildly, as he cried, "Where's my horse, I want to know, madam?" looking fiercely at Mrs. Ballard.

"Why, father," she answered, smiling at his anger as was her wont, "I arranged for you to ride in the carriage with Mrs. Woodsen, Mrs. Horner and the—"

"I'll not do it, I'll not do it," he fairly screamed, his face working with rage. "Why should a man in the prime of life ride with old women and children?"

Quite oblivious was he to the fact that these self-same old women and children were within hearing.

"I want a horse, madam," he cried, still more angrily, stamping his foot on the stone pavement, as Mrs. Ballard made no motion toward granting his request.

Catching sight of Horace, who was coming from the stables, he commanded him to have one saddled at once.

"But, father," he expostulated, "I fear you are unable to—"

"How dare you imply such a thing!" shrieked the old man, his impatience and anger reaching the boiling point. "I'll ride a work animal of any kind, sir, but I'll ride along with the rest of you, I tell you,"

As Horace turned to do his father's bidding Miss Horner ran lightly down the steps, magnificent in dark blue velvet habit, and was helped quickly onto one of the waiting horses. My sister came close behind her.

"Isabel, you have mounted the wrong horse," called Mrs. Ballard.

"What a stupid mistake," exclaimed the girl. "If this person," looking at my sister, "fears to ride him I will change at once," and she prepared to dismount.

"But I do not," said my sister, motioning to Captain Woodson to assist her into the saddle.

Mrs. Ballard gave the word to start at once, goading almost to madness the old man, who was trotting up and down the wide gravel walk, demanding and imploring her, by turns to wait for him. But she laughingly called back, "You can soon overtake us,

father. A man in the prime of life can ride faster than we poor women."

And so we left him, looking longingly after my sister, who was lovely enough to distract any one on this sunny morning as she sat so proudly on that handsome steed, her starry eyes as black and soft as the velvet habit that encased her perfect figure. Kind Mrs. Ballard had insisted that she should take this article of apparel from her own wardrobe, for my sister was the purchaser of no costly garments.

Mrs. Ballard and Captan Woodson were in the lead, but soon paused for us to come up. She warned my sister to watch Black Dock when we reached the bridge. "He detests to cross one, it is his only failing," she said.

Leaving us behind again, she forgot us in the more interesting pursuit of winning her companion's heart. We rode a little in advance of Miss Horner, who was loitering, evidently waiting for Horace to come up. As we reached the bridge Black Dock snorted with fear, refusing to put a foot forward, but rearing and plunging madly, backed away despite his rider's efforts to urge him ahead. Then Miss Horner rode quickly up, and I plainly saw her reach out her hand and strike the flank of the already frightened animal with her whip. Snorting wildly, he cleared the bridge with one leap, and—horrors! his hindmost feet slipped over the edge of that frightful abyss, whose depths were impenetrable to the eye. As I saw my sister balancing between life and death on that floundering, struggling animal, I was petrified with fear and unable to move a finger in

aiding her. In that moment I could have sworn that the beautiful woman at my side had purposely frightened the animal still more, wishing for—O, I scarcely dared name my horrible suspicion to myself. Finally the horse regained his footing and stood panting and snorting, ready to spring away in a mad gallop.

At that moment Horace came up and catching the animal's bridle, cried in trembling tones, his face white as death: "Ulrica, dear, how came you to ride this dangerous animal? I shall not hear of your going a step further on him," and he helped her to alight, and proceeded at once to change saddles, giving her his own horse.

"And yet," broke in Miss Horner, reproach in her eyes and voice, "you were willing that I should ride him, Horace."

"But you are a splendid horsewoman, Isabel," he answered, "and Ulrica is unused to riding."

But his words only called up a vindictive light to the girl's bright eyes.

Mr. Ballard had come up, meanwhile, and riding alongside my sister, Horace was compelled to fall back with Miss Horner.

The day's enjoyment was at an end for me. At one moment I questioned myself as to the best course to pursue, with this tiger-hearted woman. The next I would strive to believe that my ever ready suspicions had at last outstripped me. It surely could not be that we had a murderess in our midst. Then I remembered with a thrill of horror the fierce light that flashed to her eyes as she touched the animal. I at last concluded that she had made the mistake of

choosing the wrong horse purposely, hoping that my sister would come to grief. I knew that this girl loved Horace Ballard madly, and that she was fully aware that his heart was in another's keeping.

And he, all unconsciously, added to the flame of her love, by his kindness, his little courteous attentions which he no doubt, believed she received as would a friend or sister. Even as did my sister in her kindness of heart, encourage that poor, old, decrepit man who was ever basking in the light of her friendly smiles, which he mistook for love. Oh, it is indeed oftime kinder to be unkind!

CHAPTER XX.

“WAS IT THEFT?”

“What hope for you that better days,
Shall climb the yet unreddened seat?”
When famine in the morning slays
Why look for joy at mid-day feast?
Far shines the good, and faintly throws
A doubtful gleam through mist and rain,
But evil darkness presses close
His face against the window pane.”

I hesitated to make known my horrible suspicions in regard to that beautiful untamed creature who was an honored guest of my employer. Most of all did I hesitate to inform Ulrica, for I dreaded the accusing look she ever bent upon me when I spoke of the shortcomings of others. Ever did she find some good reason for their act, some hidden motive having good for its source; or failing in this, she would take infinite pains to prove the weakness that prompted the deed, and so suspend judgment. A master mind, indeed, was hers to ferret out good, but evil seemed entirely foreign to her nature. But the dreadful mistake I made in keeping silent bore bitter fruit.

The morning following our excursion on horseback Mr. Ballard was unable to leave his rooms. The long ride over rough roads had been too much for his feeble strength. Horace ran up at short intervals during the day, kindly, lovingly attending to his father's wants.

"Father wishes to see you, Ulrica," said he, as my sister and I were passing through the hall late in the afternoon.

We went immediately into Mr. Ballard's room and found him bolstered up in an easy chair, a most pitiful looking object, his face white and drawn with pain. No doubt Horace had carried him from the bed and placed him there. His small eyes brightened on beholding Ulrica and his thin piping voice trembled as he cried, "Ah, my dear, I'm glad to see you. Shake hands. You see I'm a little under the weather at present. Even a man in the prime of life will become ill occasionally."

A smile which would not be suppressed despite my efforts crept to my lips. The old man, glancing up, notice my presence for the first time.

"I did not ask you to come," he cried wrathfully, "you jade, get out of my sight."

Indeed, this was the first time he had addressed me since the episode of the lost train. Truly it had placed him in a most unfavorable light, and he still held me entirely responsible for the exposure. So the very sight of me was too much for him in his weak and nervous state.

"Why, father!" exclaimed Horace aghast.

"You, too, you young scoundrel, who wants a mere, gawky boy in the way when they wish to talk? Do we want them, Ulrica?" he gasped, his voice scarcely audible as he sank back exhausted. "Send them away, send them away," he whispered, still clinging desperately to Ulrica's hand.

"Oh, no, allow them to remain, Mr. Ballard," she said, in surprise.

"Just as you say, my dear, everything shall be just as you say," he replied weakly.

"Father, I am glad you think so much of Ulrica," said Horace, softly, his eyes shining with a tender joy as he regarded her.

"Of course I do think the world of her," he said, turning to her. "Don't I, Ulrica?"

"I am very glad," answered my sister kindly. "I trust you will be quite well soon."

Her voice grew tender and soothing, as though speaking to a tired, sick child, as she continued, "Would you like to accompany me to the village tomorrow? No doubt the drive would do you good."

He was more than delighted, he was radiant as he accepted the invitation. Kindly and pleasantly she talked with him for some time, he reiterating over and over again that he was still in the prime of life.

I sat by, not daring to enter into their conversation, but free to smile at will, for my presence was utterly ignored.

The following morning, Horace almost carried his father down the steps and out to the vehicle where Ulrica was waiting, for nothing short of a dying condition would have caused him to abandon such an opportunity of being near her. Horace stood hat in hand and smilingly watched Ulrica drive away. He was as blind to the quality of his father's love for my sister as was she herself.

Mrs. Ballard invited Isabel Horner to prolong her visit indefinitely. An invitation which I secretly de-

plored, though the haughty creature had grown more gracious towards Ulrica and myself during the latter part of her stay, and I began to be at ease once more. As the days passed by and I heard nothing more of her having seen my sister's name somewhere, I attached no meaning to her words. Not that Ulrica sought to hide her supposed disgrace from our new friends. Had she believed for a moment that there was good cause for Mrs. Ballard to hear the story of her past life, she would never have hesitated to disclose every circumstance.

When Ulrica returned from the village that day, she brought the mail for the house. I particularly noticed a large bundle of papers for Isabel Horner. Half an hour after she received them Ulrica and I were summoned to Mrs. Ballard's boudoir. Her kindly face wore a much disturbed expression. I knew in an instant that something was wrong. Isabel Horner stood at the window, carelessly drumming on the window pane, with white jeweled fingers.

"Ulrica," said Mrs. Ballard, holding out a paper dated eight months back, "I wish to ask you if this is true?"

There, before my eyes, danced my sister's name in glaring letters. There was chronicled all the shameful story of the separation of Dr. Ashley and his wife. I felt the blood mount to my face in a fiery wave. Not so with my sister, who stood with her hands clasped before her, with no flush of guilt on her white cheek, no suspicion of guilt in her clear eyes, as they met those of her questioner. No quiver in the steady tones, as she answered.

"It is both true and untrue, Mrs. Ballard."

The good woman looked steadily at her for a time and said: "But you were not intentionally guilty, Ulrica?"

"I was not," she replied. "Circumstances erased my guilt."

"A likely story," exclaimed Isabel Horner, turning to us a face whose beauty was all marred by the sneer which dwelt there.

"Parting man and wife is considered a crime among respectable people; you did that, did you not?"

There was a triumphant glitter in her blue eyes, as she regarded my sister's saddened face.

"I was the unwitting cause of their separation," she answered quietly.

Down Mrs. Ballard's face the tears were silently chasing each other and taking my sister's hand in a firm kindly clasp, she said, "I feel assured that no blame is attached to you. Tell me how it was, Ulrica."

"Dear Mrs. Ballard, my sister will explain all to you. I cannot bear to, not yet," she said, a little catch in her voice.

Isabel Horner raised her head defiantly and turned to leave the room, when Mrs. Ballard called to her, "Remember, Isabel, not one word of this must be heard outside this room." To her credit let me say it never was.

Mrs. Ballard burned the papers then and there. Ulrica went about her duties and I told our kind friend all, all. She was satisfied. She learned also that Ulrica was a runaway wife. It was thus my sis-

ter gained more surely her love and sympathy, by the recital of the story of her own bitter sorrows.

Isabel Horner thus malignantly sought to remove my sister from her path; she well understood Horace Ballard's truth-loving and honest, upright nature, and thinking to disgrace my sister in his sight and have her turned from the door by Mrs. Ballard, with this proof of her seeming guilt, she had sent to Richmond for those old papers, feeling certain that her plans would prove successful. For all her pains, failure was the result; but well I knew she would attempt more desperate measures. She was not the one to own defeat.

A few days later the last of the guests departed, excepting Isabel Horner. Mrs. Ballard received daily letters from Captain Woodson. She confided to me that she thought a great deal of him, and I believed him worthy even of one so noble as I knew her to be. The house once more quieted down and the old pleasant routine of daily life was resumed, all excepting Mrs. Ballard's invalidism. I suggested that perhaps she would not require my services longer. Holding up her hand in playful horror, she cried, "Do you think a great invalid like my self could get along without a companion?" and she laughed deridingly at her discarded whim.

My sister's days were spent in pleasant employment, or more plainly speaking, on the earth; her nights among the stars, for she was either in the observatory or the garden with Horace, almost nightly, until the midnight hour. And I was ever following them about, keeping within sight and hearing, during

those lengthy vigils while they talked of all hidden things, things that were indeed, beyond my simple comprehension. Truly the world and its ways were more than I could fathom. And I had grown very worldly in those days, midst so much lavishly displayed wealth, housed in carefully from the sorrows and hardships of the less fortunate. Ulrica's welfare was all I cared for. I purchased her the most beautiful garments I could afford, to set her beauty off, which seemed but to increase with time. Truly her spiritual beauty "grew as the growing of flowers." She filled my life completely and I never looked beyond her trials and triumphs. While she, in the scope of her greater love, embraced all things, even to the whole God-given universe, as it were.

I assured myself over and over again that she had found her mate in this noble young man, she who was so tender of heart that she would lift her skirts lest they brush away an ant hill, she who would step aside for fear of crushing a worm, so thoughtful was she of little things. Oh yes, Horace Ballard was a fitting mate, even for such a one. Oft times I would sit and watch her through the open door of the observatory as some great truth from out the very stellar depths found a home in her mind, and wonder at the light that seemed to change her face to one not of earthly composition. Horace Ballard was the one who first caught these great truth, letting them shine through his own powerful intellect until she also caught their bright rays, and held them as she alone was capable of doing. They sought to draw me into their researching and strange beliefs,

but I would not. Horace Ballard might have been one of the world's celebrities, but he had greater aspirations than the world's homage, which sank into insignificance compared to the loftiness of his ambition.

Of a truth my sister had found one who, even as she, was climbing the heights. One who, even as she, worshipped something which to me was intangible; something which was too great for my conception; something which was, indeed, hidden from common minds such as I knew my own to be. But I knew also, that a mysterious power upheld them in times of trial, when avowed Christians tottered and fell. Yet I doubt much, if Horace Ballard, even as my sister, ever lost the music of a single bird note, or chirp of insect, about him, so keen was his perception of small earthly objects. His mind seemed broad enough to encompass all things, either great or small. Horace, Oh, I should never tire of eulogizing Horace.

Isabel Horner's hatred for my sister grew apace, as also did her love for Horace Ballard. The very sound of his voice or footstep would cause her to tremble and, as it were, to melt from a stately iceberg to a dimpling, sunkissed summer sea. This love of hers seemed to be the only true thing in her nature, for in all else she was narrow souled, and unutterably small; nay, wicked. Once she informed Mrs. Ballard that she had seen Ulrica and Horace alone in the observatory late at night.

"Why, that is nothing!" exclaimed Mrs. Ballard, in surprise, "Ulrica is studying the stars. She is at liberty to go there when she chooses."

The haughty creature realized the uselessness of trying further to poison Mrs. Ballard's mind against my sister and so she hastened the one great move which was destined to shock the whole country side.

One morning Ulrica begged Mrs. Ballard's permission to make a trip to the city. She took a satchel, as was her custom, and Mr. Ballard insisted on accompanying her to the village, to catch the early morning train. She informed no one of her object in making the trip at that time and I wondered a little, for she had not yet drawn her monthly salary. She returned on the evening train, there was such a glad light in her eyes, such a calm serenity of manner, that I wondered the more. However, I made no inquiries, for there was that about my sister, which caused me to shrink from asking for her confidence unless it were given spontaneously.

Two mornings later I glanced from my window on arising and saw Mr. Ballard running up and down one of the garden walks wringing his thin hands and groaning pitifully. I hastened my toilet and running down the stairs met Mrs. Ballard in the hall below. She had also seen him. We turned our steps towards the garden. "Why, father, what is wrong?" she inquired, as we reached the spot where the old man was still trotting up and down, moaning and uttering unintelligible words under his breath.

Receiving no answer she caught his sleeve and shook him. "Are you daft, father? What is wrong?" she repeated, growing frightened.

"Oh, my precious ones, my precious ones. I will look again," he said, scarcely seeming to comprehend

her words, and darting into the summer house a moment; he returned with deeper despair written on every feature. Still moaning for his precious ones he ran up and down, up and down, utterly oblivious to the fact that in his dire extremity he had torn away his raven locks and was fast trampling them out of all semblance to their original appearance.

Ulrica, seeing the disturbance, hastened to us. He perceived her in time to grasp his curls and place them quickly upon his head. As she reached us he turned toward her his despairing face, down which the tears were coursing freely. Yes, tears! No misery or dire distress of his fellow man had ever had the power to dim his eye, but the loss of his gold brought them forth in torrents. Mrs. Ballard and I had examined the interior of the summer house and found there a buried box, empty, the loose earth piled high on either side. He had been robbed of his golden treasures. But the ludicrous appearance he presented with a part of his smooth shining head still revealed to the early morning daylight, and the remainder hidden beneath long flowing jetty locks, together with his tear-wet cheeks and quivering lips, was too much for Mrs. Ballard's equanimity. Clinging to the lattice of the summer house for support, she fairly screamed with laughter. The very birds paused in their morning hymns and listened to the joyous sound.

For once the old man heeded her not. Reaching two trembling hands towards my sister, he cried, "Ulrica, you are the one to comfort me in this, the greatest sorrow of my life."

Almost dragging her into the summer house, he implored her in broken, tearful accents to search for his gold. We used all our persuasive powers to induce him to go in and breakfast with us, but without avail. He would do nothing but run up and down before the summer house, darting in at intervals to look at the spot from whence his "precious ones" had fled. There he tarried until Horace came from the fields near the noon hour, and almost carried him to his room, while he still muttered of the loss of his precious ones. Not a morsel of food passed his lips that day. More bitter were the tears shed over that empty box than ever mother shed over the dead body of her child.

"This is a most dreadful affair, Ulrica," I said, when we were alone. "Who in the world could have taken it?"

"I did, Olive," was the startling reply.

I looked my horror, but was so overwhelmed with astonishment that I could not utter a word.

She smiled a little and said, "Why, Olive, there is **nothing** so dreadful about it. I took the gold to those poor families in the city and it sufficed to start them in life once more. One poor fallen girl has been saved and sent home to a heart-broken loving mother."

With shining tear-wet eyes and sorrowing sympathy in her voice, she proceeded, "Oh, if you could have seen the poor girl who came home, sickened almost to death from a factory where she toiled for a mere pittance, striving to support her crippled father and three small sisters. If you could have seen

others, toiling in those wretched health destroying places, pale with want, sinking beneath the curse of overwork and pain. If you could have seen the little neglected children, you must also have taken the gold for their sakes."

Her voice had sunk to a whisper. A strange, burning agony, terrible in its intensity, leaped to her eyes. It were as though the full knowledge of the mighty sorrows of the whole world had suddenly smote upon her senses.

"How can I help them all!" she cried, her voice sharp with untold pain. "There are so many, so many, so many."

But she seemed to free herself with one great effort of her sudden weakness, and whispered, "I must be brave and do the little I can."

Turning to me she continued in her usual tones: "Indeed, I should consider that I had not done my duty, had I not relieved their pressing wants when it was possible to do so."

"But, Ulrica, it was theft, common theft," I at length gasped out.

"The world may so term it, but I do not," she replied firmly, "neither does Horace."

"Does he know?" I asked faintly.

"I told him the whole circumstance last night," she answered. "He was very glad and said I did right, quite right, a thing he should have done himself, had he known where the gold was buried."

I said no more, for if Horace Ballard said it was right I, too, believed it must be so. It was with a

sinking heart that I went about my duties for well I knew that should any one be accused of the theft my sister would at once clear them by denouncing herself as the one who had taken the buried treasure. Even I, with all my worldliness, could not call it theft, understanding, as I did, the motive which prompted the deed.

CHAPTER XXI.

“NO.”

Heed not the sneers of those who money wise,
Call you an idle dreamer, for their gold
Will pass away when life's brief game is done
While the bright ore that in the fancy lies,
Pure, undefiled, unpurchased and unsold,
Shall live as long as starlight or as sun.”

Later in the day Isabel Horner heard of the loss and she at once suggested to Mr. Ballard that a detective be sent for. My heart stood still with apprehension as he cried excitedly, “A fool I was not to think of that before. Here, Charles, here,” he called, as he caught a glimpse of one of the men passing through the garden, where he had again taken up his station. “Get you to the village and telegraph for the best detective in Sacramento to come up immediately.”

Charles looked stupidly at him, not having yet heard of the loss, Mrs. Ballard deeming it unadvisable to spread the story at once, and the victim plainly had been too dazed for any sort of reasoning.

“Get out, you dog, and do my bidding at once,” he commanded his anger terrible to see, as he ran up and shook his clenched hand at the surprised and still motionless Charles.

“I'll, I'll—” and choking with impotent rage, he was compelled to cling to the nearby lattice for support.

Charles took a hurried leave and the irascible old

man, watch in hand, gazed up and down the walks, wild with impatience, the remainder of the afternoon.

With the evening train came Mr. Hampton, the detective, bland of manner, sharp of eyes. Making haste to examine the interior of the summer house, before the daylight faded, he stepped out, smiled and stated that he had found a clue. He glanced sharply at my perturbed countenance and smiled the more.

"Mr. Ballard, a woman's footprint is plainly visible in the disturbed earth, near the opening," he cried, turning to the old man.

"Call the women servants and I think we will soon have this mystery cleared up."

Nannie came first, followed by the others. He glanced furtively at her dainty footgear and said, "My good girl, be so kind as to lend me one of your pretty slippers, the right one, please."

The girl naturally hesitated in complying with the unusual request, while her face flushed painfully. Mr. Ballard's ire could be held in check no longer, and he cried wrathfully: "You jade! you are the one who has thieved my gold. Arrest her at once," he demanded of the waiting detective. "I see guilt in her face. Arrest her, I say!"

"Oh, sir," she cried, the tears starting, "indeed I know nothing about it. I took nothing. I am not guilty. Indeed I am not. I will prove to you that I am not," she said, hastily removing the slipper as had been required.

Mr. Hampton stepped into the summer house and returned in a moment.

"I am sorry,," he said, addressing the terrified girl, "but your slipper exactly fits the imprint in the loosened earth."

"I am not guilty, sir; I swear that I am not!" she cried, wringing her hands distractedly.

And I could have sworn it also, but I would not. However, Ulrica had arrived in time to hear the false accusation. Well I knew what was coming as she laid her hand tenderly, protectingly upon the girl's arm. Her voice sounded clear, steady and soft, above the other's wild weeping, as she said, "Nay, Nannie, do not be frightened, it was I who took the gold."

A breathless silence ensued, as with her white hands clasped before her, tall, lovely and self-accusing, she stood in our midst. But no look of guilt marred the steady glance of her truthful eyes, as she looked from one to the other of the dumbfounded group. For once, even a detective stood astounded, speechless. I glanced at Isabel Horner, whose face was fiendlike with triumph, but for this I cared not when I saw the light of unspeakable admiration and holy love in Horace Ballard's eyes as they rested upon my sister's calm face.

Mr. Hampton's power of speech at length returning to him, he stepped up to Ulrica and laying his hand on her arm, said, "Then, madam, I must take you in custody for the crime of theft."

I looked at Mr. Ballard, but with little hope, as I thought of his intense grief over his loss. "Which does he love best, my sister or his gold?" I mentally ejaculated as he stood irresolute a few moments. A desperate struggle it was too decide,—I knew by his

working face which chronicled so faithfully every conflicting emotion. Grief and uncertainty at length gave place to angry determination. I turned away, sick with apprehension, for I believed he would prosecute her.

But no! He ran and struck away Mr. Hampton's hand and cried out:

"How dare you insinuate such a thing, unhand her! I told her she could have it. It was a mere nothing, a mere nothing. What do you mean any way, by coming up here, poking your nose into other people's affairs, when you're not wanted. Get off these premises or I'll set the dogs on you."

As he paused for breath Mr. Hampton, who had stood aghast at this unexpected proceeding, said, ex-postulatingly, "But the law must be satisfied; she stands self accused."

With increased anger the old man cried, "You just dare to ever mention this affair again and I'll swear by the high heavens that I dug up the paltry stuff myself and placed it in her hands."

He shook his clenched hand in the detective's face threateningly.

Bursting suddenly into a laugh, the man stepped back, no doubt comprehending just how matters stood. I doubted not that this was the first generous act the old man had ever performed. Horace took Mr. Hampton to one side and said, "I know all about it. It is all right; let the matter drop, Mr. Hampton."

"Perhaps your father is a little—" and he tapped his forehead significantly.

"My father is very old," said Horace gently.

Mr. Hampton was our guest until the morrow, when he smilingly took his departure, little dreaming, as did any of us, how soon he would return on a more important mission than this one had proved to be.

Before we left the garden that day Mr. Ballard turned to Ulrica and assured her in quivering tones, "You are perfectly welcome to it, my dear, perfectly welcome. I'll make it all back again," he declared, a little ring of hope creeping into his voice.

"I'll raise the rents on those lazy beggars, I'll cut down the wages of the field hands and make them work twice as hard as they have been doing. Oh, I'll get it all back some way."

Catching sight of Isabel Horner as she turned toward the house, his anger was again in the ascendant. Pointing a trembling finger at her, he cried, "It was you who put it into my head to send for that meddlesome rascal. You great big read-headed minx. I wish you would go home, any way."

Receiving no reply he turned again to Ulrica and in unsteady, imploring tones said, "You haven't spent it yet, Ulrica? Oh, say that you haven't spent it!"

There was such childish fear in his voice as to the answer he might receive that I almost found it in my heart to pity him.

"I have given away every penny of it," she said quietly.

He sank prostrate and wept aloud. We were compelled to leave him there until a late hour, when Horace again induced him to come indoors.

Mrs. Ballard extolled my sister's act greatly, and declared that though she herself could never have been

brave enough to do such a thing, she admired the one who was; that it was perfectly right for the money to be used in benefiting the needy instead of lying idle, as it had so long. Moreover, the utter discomfiture of the old man, for what seemed to her so trivial a cause, was a real source of merriment to her. She would laugh immoderately each time the affair came to mind.

The following day, as we were still sitting in the parlor, after some callers had taken their departure, I remarked that the Horners must be very wealthy.

"Oh, no," she replied; "on the contrary, they are practically bankrupt. You must have noticed," she went on, "how shabbily gowned both Mrs. Horner and Grace were while here. Mr. Horner is distracted with debt. Isabel spends everything on her wardrobe and jewels. To judge from the lavishness of both, one must naturally conclude that they are the possessors of much wealth. Look at Isabel now," she said, as the young lady was walking in the garden, clad in a handsome ruby silk gown, its rich folds gleaming in the sunlight, enhancing her marvelous beauty in a wonderful manner. "No doubt that very gown, which has been sent up from the city since Mrs. Horner's departure, has cost the poor woman many deprivations and hardships."

I was much surprised, for Isabel Horner's collections of jewels were far superior to that of Mrs. Ballard, and each day brought forth something new in the line of dainty, beribboned, lace-trimmed gowns. Then there must be wealth where this girl bestowed her hand; no doubt her love for Horace Ballard had found its greatest incentive in his probable inheritance.

"Isabel should make a brilliant marriage with her unusual beauty," continued Mrs. Ballard, musingly; "but she is so proud and cold, though she is not so to some one I know," she continued with a little laugh.

At that moment Horace, passing through the garden on his way from the fields, had paused to speak with her. Plucking a beautiful white lily with some laughing remark, he placed it in her red-gold hair. Smiling sweet and tender she grew in a moment.

"No one could think her cold now," said Mrs. Ballard; "but with all her beauty and magnificent apparel she stands less chance of winning his heart than if she would don a five-cent print and kneel to wash up the floor of her father's kitchen, as I have seen her little sister Grace do time after time."

Mrs. Ballard relapsed into meditative silence, and Horace, after lingering a few moments by Isabel Horner's side, lifted his hat to her, turned and came toward the house, his light, firm step making sweetest music to me, for I doubt much if I could have told even then which I loved best, him or Ulrica.

The following day Mrs. Ballard and I went to the city, though I was much disturbed. However, my duty was to follow my employer's wishes, and I could make no demur. As we were making some necessary purchases preparatory to our return, Mrs. Ballard insisted that I carry home a handsome black silk gown for Ulrica.

"She would be magnificent so gowned," she declared, "and I do love to see beauty suitably clad." She generously offered to advance Ulrica's salary, if I had not a sufficient sum.

"I think she has already made plans for the expenditure of her next month's salary," I said hesitatingly.

"Nonsense," cried she cheerfully; "there's no wisdom in one so lovely wasting her best days in wearing such simple—yes, positively shabby, apparel."

I purchased the gown, but with many misgivings. When Ulrica saw it a little glad light came into her eyes and she ran her hand over the soft, glistening folds, as though the very feel of it seemed good. But presently, pushing it from her, a determined look settled in her eyes, where the glad light had been.

"I cannot wear it," she said firmly.

"Why not, Ulrica? It will be very serviceable," I said pettishly.

"Yes, and I know something I can do with its price, which will serve me for all eternity," she answered. "It must be returned with as little loss as possible. Olive, dear, I fear you are growing very worldly," she added gently.

I noted the deep, almost holy light of renunciation in her eyes, and was filled with joyous admiration as I realized that she was not to be tempted by worldly things, great or small.

"Dear," I cried, "it is so easy for you to be good!"

"Easy, Olive, easy," she said, looking strangely at me. "Oh, if you did but know, if you did but know! Do you think that temptation does not come to me with as great force and in as many deceptive guises as to others? Why, Olive, I do believe that your secret thoughts, compared to my own, are as sunlight compared to Stygian darkness."

"Listen and I will tell you something," she said,

standing before me with clasped hands and sorrow-darkened eyes. "You remember that last scene I had with Martha, when she so unjustly assailed my honor. But perhaps you were not aware that when I stepped forward and raised my hand it was to grasp the knife lying upon the kitchen table. You saw me stop quite still and struggle with my evil thoughts—yes, murderous thoughts they were, for in that moment I hated her with a deadly hatred—such fierce hatred—that I forgot all things save my bloodthirsty desire to take her life. She read my thoughts aright, I know by her blanched face and staring eyes. But I ruled my spirit. You know how well. Again—"

"Oh, Ulrica," I cried, aghast, "stop!"

"Wait," she said, holding up one hand, enjoining silence. "All my life I have longed with a desperate longing for the luxuries which great wealth can procure. I have longed to array myself in rich and costly garments. I have longed to be decked with shining jewels. I love to feel these soft carpets beneath my feet and behold the grandeur and lavish display of these costly objects which are gathered about us here. So well do I love these things that no day passes in which I do not blush with shame that it is so, for never, never will I revel in luxury while there is one suffering, needy creature in existence."

A most dazzling light enveloped her countenance as she made this great vow. How great a vow only those sharing her strange beliefs could realize. For by it did she not doom herself to the woes of poverty for countless future ages? Aye, all down the dim vista of the coming centuries, centuries upon centuries, ages

upon ages, while objective life exists will there not be suffering? How long, then, must she go her lowly way, laboring amongst her fellow creatures? I sought to follow this train of thought and find the answer, but thought grew dim and faded into nothingness. Was her crown lost in the far-off mists? No, oh no! for justice rules.

The light left her face and her eyes suddenly darkened with a sort of fear, as she came near to me and continued: "And there is something more, Olive, I wish to tell you, something still more shameful than all else. That day when I carried the gold to the city, the horrible temptation came to me, like a demon, seeming to whisper in alluring tones, 'Why not flee to him with this wealth? He is alone and bankrupt. Why not go and taste of the exquisite delights of love, a thing you have never known? Such an opportunity may never present itself again. Do not permit this great happiness to slip from you.'

"Indeed, Olive," she cried shudderingly, "I so far succumbed to my desires that I was on the point of purchasing a ticket to Richmond. As I stood waiting there, holding that satchel, heavy with its weight of gold, each moment its heaviness increased until it seemed I could stand no longer beneath its enormous weight. Oh, yes; it was even as a demon dragging me to perdition.

"The suffering, pinched faces of those little children and the tear-stained ones of their mothers whom I had started out to succor, arose before me with mute lips and appealing eyes. Still that voice kept whispering. 'Bah, what are they to you? Have you not already

sacrificed enough of worldly pleasures for such as they? Why should you give up the one great joy of your life?' Still I stood at that little window, waiting for my ticket. I was leaving you, and my little child—aye, even my soul's salvation behind me, even as on that other time. But help came, Olive, for Horace's face arose before me, his clear eyes, soft with a great pity as they searched my innermost soul in that mad moment. Then I heard his voice, his voice, so full of strength, so tender, and yet so firm, say, 'Not that, Ulrica.'

"With a shock I remembered my surroundings. The ticket agent was staring at me blankly. 'What place did you say, madam? I did not hear.' But I shook my head and turned away, so overjoyed at my deliverance that I was incapable of speech.

"Oh, Olive, to think, just to think, how near I came to making a theft of the taking of that gold!" she cried with white, quivering lips.

But her voice grew soft and steady as she said, "How good it is to call one like Horace Ballard friend. I think I could scarcely stand alone but for his support."

Alas, the light in her eyes was but the light of friendship, and indeed a holy light to see. The recital of her recent temptation proved to me too surely that she still wore the image of that other one in her heart. and I feared that her will would yet prove weaker than her love and she would never be able to tear that image away and say, "I have conquered."

CHAPTER XXII.

"IN THE GARREN."

"Her pure, sad eyes, so clear, so soft, so bright,
As in a spell, me thought could I behold
Within their solemn veils, I would know love aright,
And that divineness which no years make old."

The following evening, after Ulrica had played and sung us all into tears, she and I repaired to the garden, where Horace had preceded us. As was their custom, they paced the broad graveled walks, talking of many, many things that were as a sealed book to me. My presence was forgotten, and I was quite content that it was so as I sat almost hidden in the shadow of the vines enjoying the scene about me.

It was now the middle of May, and the fair garden was in the height of its rich bloom. Heavy was the air with the langurous breath of a thousand blossoms, while the royal day king, as if regretting that he had betaken his smiles from so fair a scene, shone with redoubled brilliancy upon his handmaiden, fair Luna, who flooded the landscape with chastened beams of silvery brightness. From out the sparkling, dewy border of grasses and tall laburnum bushes insects murmured sweet, as if to swell the hymn of a most sweet-throated night bird that was perched near by, thrilling the air as with the melodious notes of a score of feathered songsters. Long I sat thus and mused upon the past, also mapping out my sister's future, which I tried to assure myself would be a golden one.

I came back to the present with a start as I heard her say, "It is quite late; I must go in now, Horace."

"Just one moment, dear," he said; "I have something to tell you to-night. Can you not guess what it is, Ulrica?"

With love-lit eyes he searched her face for some responsive sign to his own all-absorbing love.

"I will try," she said. "You have learned something new, and—"

"No; it is something I have known a long time," he interrupted.

"Then why did you not explain it to me," she asked quickly. "Could I not understand until now?"

"I scarcely dared tell you before," he said softly. "But I cannot delay longer," and smoothing back the curls from her white brow with lingering touch, he kissed it with lover's lips, and she did not say him nay. Taking her lovely face between his hands, in his eyes the love light shining as I had never quite seen in man's eyes before, mingled hope and uncertainty in his tender voice, he said, "Ulrica, sweet, do you love me?"

There was no flutter of white eyelid, no flush mantled the pearly white of cheek or brow. Looking at him, surprised and smiling, she answered, "Why, Horace, you know I do."

When he spoke again his deeply tender voice thrilled with unspeakable joy. "Then, love, I am impatient to make you all my own. When will you be my wife, Ulrica?"

Holding her close, he kissed her white face again and again, which did but grow whiter beneath his caress. But soon she found strength to struggle from

his clasp, and stood looking at him in dumb dismay. Putting out her hand as if to ward off a blow, she said, with such a ring of bitter pain and disappointment in her voice that he could not mistake her meaning, "Oh, friend, not that!"

Slowly the light died out of Horace Ballard's eyes. His face grew white as her own as he realized that with that one word, "friend," his hope and happiness had departed. Silently they stood and looked at each other, these two whom the Father in His divine wisdom had intended as one, yet who for a space must be divided because the dark shadow of that other one still stood between them.

As she saw the sorrow in his face, which even then he strove to conceal from her lest it cause her pain, she sought to take his hand as she raised her tear-dimmed eyes to his and cried, "Horace, I never once thought of this."

"Why not?" he asked in so changed a voice I could never have recognized it as his own.

"Because, dear friend, I have loved, I love yet," she said, "and it has blinded me."

"Yet you never told me, Ulrica," he said reproachfully.

"I could not, it shames me so to love such a one," she said, her voice sinking almost to a whisper.

Horace stepped back and stood in silence, waiting for her to pass on to the house. But at this she cried, wildly plucking at his sleeve, "Oh, Horace, call me friend; I could not bear to lose you."

"Assuredly I am your friend for all time, Ulrica," he said, making a brave effort to smile. And to please

her he took her hands in friendship and assured her again and again that she was blameless. A lesser man would, at such a time, have accused her of leading him to hope. But not Horace Ballard.

"Now go in, dear; it is late," he said, after a time; but still she tarried, loth to leave him. "Do go," he at length cried out. "Oh, leave me; I am not myself to-night."

There was that in his tone which demanded obedience. She turned and left him, standing alone, alone indeed, with his shattered hopes and longing love, which he must have felt in that moment were destined to be forever fruitless. In his white face there was no vestige of hope, and with a bitter groan he turned to leave the spot, when directly in his path stood his father. His face was white also, white with fiendish anger, as he cried, fairly choking with unholy passion. "How dare you, you young vagabond! you miserable beggar! You think to cut the old man out, do you? Why, she referred to me when she said that she had loved, that she still loves."

Evidently he had not heard the completion of my sister's sentence in regard to the object of her love.

Panting for breath, the irate old man continued: "Do you suppose that you'd stand any chance while a man like myself was by? Ulrica Warren is no fool; she knows a man when she sees one."

At another time I could have laughed at the exalted view in which he held his charms.

"Oh, father, what are you saying?" cried Horace, staring at him incredulously.

"Can't you understand plain English when it's

spoken?" he snarled, with increased anger. "If not, perhaps you can read it, and he fluttered a sheet of note paper in Horace's face. Striking a match, he held it close and bade him read. When he had finished he said nothing, but stood in silence, thinking deeply.

"Don't that convince you, you young dog?" cried the old man. "Don't she ask me to meet her by moonlight on the bridge? Don't she say how she longs to be alone with me, from all prying eyes? Don't she sign herself, 'your own Ulrica?'"

"Why don't you speak?" he continued wrathfully, raising his hand as if to strike Horace in the face.

"There must be some mistake, father," he answered, rousing himself. "She could never—"

"There is not," interrupted the other. "I told her once that I loved her and she said she was very glad. Mistake indeed!" he ejaculated scornfully; "don't I know she'll have me? I've always felt convinced that she would, and now this little scrap of paper proves beyond a doubt that she loves me, me alone.

"And I've something else to say to you, too," he added, with a malicious grin; "it shall be my revenge upon you for this night's work. Now listen. When the sun sets to-morrow your sweet expectations to come into possession of my hard-earned gold will be a thing of the past. You miserable spendthrift! I'd rise from the very grave to prevent you from getting the smallest fraction of it in your hands. This matter shall be attended to at once, I tell you," he went on, "for I hate you, boy—I've always hated you. Be gone from my sight."

"Oh, father, do not say that," cried Horace im-

ploringly. "I have done nothing to incur such bitter feelings. I do not wish to inspire hatred in any living creature."

"I say it over a hundred times, I hate you. I hate you!" he replied; "and stop calling me father, too," he added meanly. "You may not have the right, anyway. I've always doubted it."

Horace Ballard took one step forward and looked at his father, a gleam in his eyes such as I had never seen there before. So fierce a gleam of fiery anger was it that I was minded to make my presence known, and rush between them. For in this just anger he towered above the puny old man as if he would crush him with one blow. But as I watched him, fearfully, breathlessly, I soon knew that my fears were groundless. He stood quite still, and struggled manfully, more than manfully, with that demon of rage, even as I had seen my sister do on one occasion, in that dark, lonely farm house. And when I saw the angry gleam in his eyes give place to great and glad triumph, I knew that a mighty battle had been fought and won. When Horace spoke again his voice was soft and pityingly tender. "If I can bear calmly this insult offered my dead mother, I can bear anything. Father, I pity you. From my heart I pity you."

"Verily a soft answer turneth away wrath." The old man stood in shamed silence before his most noble son. Not long, however, could this old man keep silent, and in a crestfallen tone he said, "Well, if you don't believe Ulrica will meet me to-morrow night, you may watch and assure yourself that there has been no mistake made. Or perhaps you had better

ask her early in the morning," he added spitefully.

"I shall not see her in the morning, I shall watch," answered Horace, something new and strange in his voice.

It was thus father and son parted. And I, I lay for hours with my face in the dew-wet grass, crying out that it was not fair for one like Horace Ballard to be so sorely tried. I was angry with my sister, angry and wildly impatient. Why would she not take the gift of this man's love, which from the beginning of time was meant alone for her? Then as I remembered what prevented her from accepting the priceless gift, my anger gave place to sorrow and pity for her. Then, too, as that old man's words kept echoing in my ears, I tried to solve the mystery, for mystery it was to me, of that letter, and I almost despaired. But one solution presented itself. And yet I tried to assure myself that she would not suffer to sacrifice herself to this old man, in order to use his great wealth for some benevolent purposes. But was she not ever doing strange and surprising things? Oh yes, she kept me in a continual state of perplexity and often dismay, but I am certain had she acted differently than she did in any instance, I should have lost some of the reverence in which I ever held her. Oh yes, my brain was indeed in a whirl with sorrow and uncertainty that night. When I rose to go indoors the eastern skies were already glowing in anticipation of the coming of the day king. Reaching my room, I soon fell asleep. So late was it before I woke that Mrs. Ballard knocked on my door, begging admittance, fearing lest I was ill. And I was ill, with one

of those agonizing sick headaches that seemingly cause the world and its events to stand still and wait for one's recovery. I inquired immediately for Ulrica, intending to inform her of what occurred in the garden after her departure. I also wished for an explanation of that letter which was in Mr. Ballard's possession. But she and the children had gone in the carriage, quite early, to a neighbor's and were not to return until evening. Mrs. Ballard and Nannie did what they could for me, and sat by me in turns all day. Late in the afternoon I inquired for Horace. I longed to assure him that it was not, it could not be, true, that which his father had told him.

"I have not seen him to-day," Mrs. Ballard told me. "He is very busy, you know, and he may have breakfasted with one of the tenants. He often does when obliged to be out at an early hour."

So the opportunity to comfort him did not present itself.

"I wonder what ails father to-day?" I heard Mrs. Ballard say to Nannie later in the evening. "He has been brushing his clothes most carefully, has trimmed his whiskers and given them a new coat of dye. And even twisted that new wig into little corkscrew curls, which droop on his shoulders most beautifully. I wish you could see him," she said, turning to me; "the smile on his face alone would cure your headache at once. But when I asked him if he wished to borrow my train to complete his beautiful toilet, he looked at me so murderously that I fled in dismay," and she laughed gayly at the remembrance.

"When we went to the village to-day," she contin-

ued, "to make out the deed to this place" (she having sold her estate to Mr. Ballard) "what do you think he brought back?"

I told her I could not even guess.

"A ring," she declared. "He must intend coming to the point soon. I wish I could see Ulrica's face when he lays his heart at her feet," and she laughed immoderately as she pictured the probable scene.

It was thus the hours passed. She found so much cause for merriment whilst chronicling the old man's eccentricities that at times I was forced to laugh despite my maddening brain.

"What sort of woman was Horace's mother?" I asked her.

"I never knew her," she answered, checking her mirth at once, "but from all I have heard I think her a most extraordinary character. It seems that she married, or as I should put it, sacrificed herself to Horace's father with the mistaken idea that by so doing she could provide her aged father with medical aid and a peaceful home, and also do many good deeds for others. But in that she was mistaken, for no common laborer's wife ever endured a life of such hardship and toil as was her portion. Her father died of a broken heart when he realized the sacrifice she had made for his sake, and she soon followed him to the grave, partly from the same cause, partly from overwork."

And this is exactly what my sister is intending to do, I assured myself with a sinking heart.

Well I knew that she would never hesitate to make any personal sacrifice, however great, in order to better the condition of the least portion of suffering human-

ity. Well, indeed, I knew that no arguments of mine could induce her to alter her mind when she had once decided that her duty lay in performing a certain act. Later in the evening, when we were momentarily expecting her return, the sky swiftly grew overcast, and almost immediately a storm was upon us, a storm which bade fair to last far into the night.

I felt sure that Ulrica would not return home until the following morning, and I, drowsy from the pain in my head, soon fell asleep, secure in the belief that that proposed meeting at the bridge would not take place that night. O, that fatal, fatal sleep! Why did all things, even the very elements, conspire against me in order to thwart me in my efforts to prevent that which was to be? Just before I sank into that fatal sleep I remember hearing Mrs. Ballard whisper to Nannie, bidding her look into the hall as she opened my door a very little. They both stood and watched the strange actions of Mr. Ballard, who was trotting excitedly up and down the length of the hall.

He passed and repassed my door, wringing his hands and moaning most pitifully. "Oh, this will ruin it all; it will ruin it all!" he repeated again and again. "This cursed storm, this thrice cursed storm, might have waited. Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do? Moonlight on the bridge. Just think of it, how suitable. But now—oh dear, what shall I do?"

And so, utterly oblivious to the fact that there might be observers, he still trotted up and down the hall, railing at the untimely storm.

Mrs. Ballard suddenly opened wide the door and looked out. "What is it, father?" she said, throwing

sympathizing pity into her voice, as if addressing a sorrowing little child. "Has some one taken more of your precious ones?"

He turned and confronted her, the bright light falling full on his weazened face. Evidently he had been shedding briny tears, and in the effort to wipe them away with his kerchief they had come in contact with his jetty eyebrows, which fact had proved most disastrous to his beauty. Great streaks of sable hue decorated his sunken cheeks in a most striking manner. Mrs. Ballard's screams of laughter, accompanied by Nannie's, were still echoing and re-echoing through the house long after he had fled to his room, slammed and bolted his door.

Some hours later I woke with a start. The moon was shining directly in my face, and I was alone. My illness had vanished as completely as had the storm. Springing up, I hurried to my sister's room to see if she had chanced to return. I found that her lamp had been lighted, and I suddenly remembered that it was the closing of a door that had awakened me. I glanced at the clock on the mantel, whose hands pointed to the half hour after ten. Despite the lateness of the hour, she meant to keep her tryst with Mr. Ballard. I turned and sped quickly down the broad stairs, through the brilliantly lighted hall below, thence through the side door and followed the path leading to the bridge. I would overtake her, if possible, and beg her not to go. I hastened my steps, instinctively feeling that some horrible catastrophe was about to take place.

There was still a light wind which disturbed the topmost branches of the tall forest trees, sending down

little showers of rain drops on my uncovered head. Drifts of white clouds were scurrying across the face of the moon, as if racing in their desire to join the dark bank of cloud lying low on the northern horizon. The storm had cleared the atmosphere and the moonbeams shone with redoubled brilliancy. All this I noted as I hastened my steps still more. I was compelled to pause for breath as I came in full view of the bridge, on one end of which my sister and Mr. Ballard stood.

As I have said before, the bridge was attached to the trunk of a gigantic oak, whose spreading branches reached far out over the deep ravine which it spanned. The moonbeams, filtering through the tree tops, fell directly on her white-robed figure, as she stood listening to the other's words. I did not hear her utter a word, and I knew by her very attitude that her silence was the silence of amazement. Then—oh! even now I shrink from chronicling what took place, for the horror comes back and clings to me. But I must on with my narrative. Then the old man stepped forward and sought to take her hands, and she threw them out suddenly as if to warn him to keep back.

Before I could move or form any plan of action I saw him fall backward, grasp at a projecting limb of the oak, miss it as he went over into that black, yawning abyss. A cry of such agonizing fear broke the stillness of the night, a cry so piercing and full of horror that it caused my blood to congeal in my veins, as it were, and I could neither move nor speak as I gazed on the spot where the old man had stood so short a time before.

My sister turned and fled, passing me with unseeing eyes, her face white and drawn. Still I stood immovable, and—I saw something more. Horace Ballard rose from the trunk of a fallen tree near me, so near I might have reached out my hand and touched him.

“Oh, my poor, misguided Ulrica!” he cried aloud; “how can I believe what I have seen this night?”

Throwing his hat to the ground, he turned to leave the spot, then hesitating a moment, pulled his kerchief from his pocket, threw it also to the ground, and fled to the woods like a mad man.

The truth flashed to my dazed brain. He had done this to shield her crime. He had left these proofs behind and fled that all might believe him guilty and so pass her by. Had he taken time to reason, to let his better judgment predominate in that mad moment, he would have known that my sister would not have it so. It was an heroic and yet a weak thing to do, proving that with all his loftiness of spirit, all his greatness of mind, he was still not infallible. But was it any wonder that in the face of that circumstance he should lose faith in her, and with it, his better judgment?

I was minded to follow him and tell him that I knew he was innocent; tell him to let her suffer for her crime; that she was all unworthy of this great sacrifice, and his still greater love. Had I to do it again I should wade through mire to my knees in order to reach him, through piercing thorns and over jagged stones, until my feet were torn and bleeding, that I might comfort him.

But the ties of blood and a life time's love forbade, so I turned to the one who needed me least.

My one desire was to get my sister to her room unobserved. All my thoughts were centered upon accomplishing this as I sped after her, terror and despair in my heart. We reached the side entrance at the same moment. The door opened suddenly, and we were confronted by—Isabel Horner.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"MURDER."

"It matters not, for if the singer's heart
Of the great heart of Nature is a part,
No clogging circumstance of earth can chill
The living song with which its pulses thrill,
Aye, though the bitterness of death be nigh,
Though sullen clouds obscure the smiling sky,
Though bound in dungeon deep or castle strong,
The soul will soar to God in chainless song."

—Mortimer C. Brown.

"What horrible cry was that I heard, Ulrica Warren?" she asked, with glittering eyes, scanning my sister's white, terrified face.

"We must summon help," cried Ulrica. "Call Charles and the others. There must be ropes and lanterns taken to the bridge. Mr. Ballard—" here her voice failed her completely.

I could only stand by, helpless, silent and dazed.

Isabel Horner quickly summoned the servants, telling them that something horrible had taken place at the bridge, that Mr. Ballard had perhaps been murdered. She brought Mrs. Ballard from above stairs, and she ran wildly to Horace's room, but found no sign of his presence since the day before.

Ulrica led the way back to the bridge. A terrified group, we stood on the brink of that yawning abyss, striving to pierce the impenetrable blackness while a

light was lowered into the depths. At length we discovered the body of the old man, lying quite still where he had lodged on a ledge of rock, a short distance above the angry stream, which was swollen by the recent rain. A rope was placed about Charles, and he was lowered into the chasm. Other ropes were let down, which he made fast about the body, and the poor old shattered frame was drawn up to where we stood with blanched faces and trembling limbs. Not a vestige of life remained; his neck and both arms had been broken by the fall. Surely death had been merciful, for it had come swiftly and surely. Mrs. Ballard was almost overcome, and cried, wildly, "Ulrica, tell us how it happened."

My sister opened her lips to speak, when Nannie suddenly cried out that she had found some article on the ground, and fetching it quickly to the light, each and every one recognized it as the hat worn by Horace when last seen. His kerchief was also found.

My sister looked upon these objects and seemed to ponder deeply. Again Mrs. Ballard implored her to explain.

"I cannot," she said, rousing herself a little and looking most strangely at her questioner.

"She means that she will not," came Isabel Horner's voice, sharp and cutting, "for she knows how it happened. Ulrica Warren is a murderess."

My sister stood quite still and said—nothing. Consternation and horror were written on every face.

"Ulrica, deny it," cried Mrs. Ballard, shaking her roughly in her excitement.

"I know, Mrs. Ballard," she said, "however great

the provocation, whatever the motive, it was still a terrible thing to do."

Again she relapsed into deep meditative silence, and she did not deny the accusation. Our kind friend stepped back, and I know by the increased horror on her face that she believed my sister guilty. It was, indeed, a sad white-faced procession that wended its way in silence along that woodland path where scarce two hours before the old man had tripped gaily to meet his love by moonlight.

The body was laid in the long room which had served as ball room such a short time ago. I followed my sister to her room after Mrs. Ballard had taken my hands and assured me that she was still my friend.

"I pity you, Olive," she said, weeping bitterly, "from my heart I pity you."

I found my sister, lost in deepest thought, white and silent. I did not question her. I also was silent, as a hundred conflicting thoughts arose to torture my fevered brain. Even then had she denied the crime I would have believed her. I had more faith in the truth of her word than I had in my own eyesight. Though I had seen I would not believe if she would but deny it. But she did not. Could it be possible that she would yet look at me with a light of heroism in her eyes, such as might have been worn by the brave woman who rid her countrymen of the bloody tyrant Marat, and assure me that there were times when even murder was commendable? That by the ending of this one puny, worthless life, so many lives might be made happy and useful by the use of his great wealth. Though at that time she was not aware of the dead

man's altered will, she knew that Horace Ballard would so dispose of his inheritance when it came to him.

"Yes, there must be some such motive for the deed, which makes it plausible and right according to her view," I decided. And then a still more horrible pain shot through my heart as I remembered some words spoken by her but two days since.

"Had that old man said something which had fired her to such fierce, quick anger that the temptation to take his life had mastered her for the time being, as it had so nearly done on that occasion with Martha? I looked at her in wild despair as she sat so white and still, with that puzzled expression of deep thoughtfulness and yet I did not question her.

With the early morning light came Mr. Hampton, accompanied by a brother detective. Later came the coroner to hold an inquest over the dead body. The two detectives hastened to view the spot where the murder had been committed. After questioning the servants and being told of the finding of the articles belonging to Horace, they satisfied themselves that he was implicated in the murder of his father, if not the direct cause.

Many were present at the inquest and all looked askance at my sister as she entered the room. In her great black eyes there was a pitying light as she looked upon the dead man's face; but not a vestige of fear was discernible in their clear depths. Yet this fact brought me no comfort for well I knew that she would bear the consequences of the crime, whatever they were, bravely and unflinchingly. The servants

were first questioned, all telling the same story. Mrs. Ballard's story also coincided exactly with theirs. Then Isabel Horner with many malicious glances in my sister's direction, told how she had heard a horrible cry, coming from the direction of the bridge, and running from her room had met Ulrica Warren at the north entrance, her face white, as with great fear. How she had ordered ropes and lanterns to be taken to the bridge at once, no doubt thinking that all subterfuge were useless, as she had been caught red-handed, as it were. With steady, heartless precision she related all that had been said while we stood around the dead body, as it lay at our feet when first rescued.

Through it all my sister stood immovable, white and deeply thoughtful. But when the decision was finally rendered, that Horace Ballard was also implicated in the murder, no doubt planning it out long before, she spoke up at once.

"Horace Ballard is utterly incapable of conspiring with any one in order to bring about the death of his father, whom he loved," she said, her face lighting up gloriously, a ring of decision in her voice. "I know he is innocent of that!"

"Ah, some one must have done it, young lady; evidently you were present when it took place," said the coroner sharply.

"Oh, yes, I—" then she closed her lips firmly.

Plainly she knew more than she would tell.

"Then who did it?" came the question straight.

"That I cannot tell. I must have more time to think," she made answer.

He looked significantly at the detective. Isabel Horner had been speaking in an undertone to the latter, who turned to the coroner and said, "Her sister, Mrs. Blackburn, was out also during the time this must have taken place. Perhaps she can throw more light on this affair."

The coroner turned to me sharply with, "What did you see?"

I looked my agony at my sister. Every one noted my hesitation as I reluctantly began my story.

"I followed my sister last night," I stammered, "thinking to overtake her and persuade her to return with me, but—"

"Why did you wish her to return with you? How did you know she was going to the bridge at that late hour?" interrupted my questioner, with his sharp glance upon me.

After a painful silence I stammered out: "I overheard a conversation between Horace Ballard and his father the evening before and I—I feared—" In wild confusion I hesitated and then became silent.

"Ah," exclaimed the coroner with a knowing smile, "go on with your story; this is growing interesting."

So closely questioned was I that I was compelled to tell how I had seen my sister throw out her hands, how I had seen the old man at that moment go over the side of the bridge, and then how she had fled toward the house with white, terrified face.

An ominous silence followed these statements, then some one near me whispered, "She will not shield the murderess."

"Did you see nothing more, absolutely nothing?"

The question came so suddenly I was taken unawares and my face burned with the fiery wave of shame which surged over it as I thought, "I can save my sister by condemning Horace Ballard." Then I as suddenly felt that she would not have it so.

I scarcely knew what to say in my perplexity, but when I was questioned still more sharply, I said that I had seen Horace Ballard flee to the woods after that death-cry had pierced the night air so widely. But—I did not tell them that I knew he was innocent. I looked at my sister and noted that she was listening to my words intently, almost breathlessly.

"Ah, ah," exclaimed the coroner, musingly.

After a few moments of thought he resumed: "In this conversation which you overheard between Mr. Ballard and his son, did any disagreement arise—any unpleasantness?"

Again the blood rushed to my face and I was silent. But finally it was all drawn from my reluctant lips, all the story of that scene between father and son the night before the murder.

"So," declared the coroner, when I had done, "the woman writes a note to the old man who is in love with her to decoy him to a lonely spot, and there the man, who has quarreled with his father, this self-same old man, meets her, and together they make away with him. A sad business, a very sad business. But why he should run away, thus proving his guilt beyond doubt, is a little puzzling. However, he may have been overcome with fear at the moment," he concluded.

It was thought strange indeed that a young man should absent himself so suddenly, knowing that his

father lay dead at the bottom of that horrible abyss and not come to his aid, unless he were implicated in bringing about the death.

"So his disappearance, coupled with the evidence of guilt found upon the spot, implicates him irretrievably," concluded the coroner. It was thus settled that William R. Ballard came to his death at the hands of Ulrica Warren and Horace Ballard.

My sister was immediately arrested.

When Mr. Ballard's papers were searched and his will in her favor found, it but added new cause for belief in her guilt. Her face depicted no emotion save surprise, a very great surprise when she learned of its contents.

"Oh, if I did but know what to do!" she cried, that puzzled look settling again in her eyes. "But I will go," she added, as if to herself.

"Certainly you will go," said Mr. Hampton, who had her in charge. "The old man cannot refuse to have you prosecuted for taking his life as he did for taking his gold."

But I doubt if she heard him.

So it was that she was remanded to a prison cell to await her trial for murder. I left Mrs. Ballard after the funeral and took up my residence in the city, near the prison where my sister was incarcerated.

Nothing had yet been heard of Horace, though a vigorous search was being made in order to bring him to justice, I was informed. "Oh, if he would but return," was my one cry. How my thoughts followed him in his exile, while I was almost wild to make known to him the horrible necessity that had

caused me to keep back a part of the truth. For I knew that, wherever he was, he would keep posted through the papers and all I had said had been put in glaring print.

Perhaps, after all, my deception would prove to be useless, for my sister would never permit him to suffer for this crime, and yet, why did she not say that she knew he was innocent when that decision implicating him was made.

I did indeed long to comfort him in the deep sorrow he was suffering from his disappointed love and the other horror which had made it doubly hard to bear. The labyrinth of mystery and despair into which I had fallen dazed my brain until I was incapable of reasoning further. The only fact that seemed clear to me, was that my sister had committed this crime and that she must suffer the penalty.

Bowed down with grief and horror I crept to the prison and begged to see her at the first opportunity. The jailor conducted me down a flight of steps, through a long echoing corridor, and unlocking the heavy iron door of a cell bade me enter. My sister turned from the small grated window through which a bar of sunlight had found its way, and greeted me with the question, "Have you yet heard of Horace?"

"No," I answered sadly.

"It is strange, very strange, yet I know that he will come when he learns where I am. He will surely be able to clear up this mystery," she added.

"Mystery," I exclaimed, greatly puzzled, as I noted the calm light in her eyes, "how can she be thus

self-possessed while in such a horrible position," I mentally ejaculated.

Though a puzzled, sorrowful expression still dwelt upon her face, she seemed even as she had in other times. I scarcely knew what to believe. I knew that Horace Ballard was innocent, so how could I believe her to be also after what I had seen. I visibly shuddered as she stood smoothing back my hair in her caressing manner, shuddered at touch of that hand, which I believed had taken the life of a fellow creature.

"What is it, Olive?" she asked in surprise, as she took away her hand, and looked intently at me.

Before me rose a vision of the tear-stained face of a little child with chubby legs, half bared to the drifting snow, crying out piteously for my love and protection. I thought of all the cruel circumstances of this child's past, as she grew to womanhood, and how bravely, how nobly she had endured. How she had ever risen triumphant above the temptations that beset her pathway, never once falling from that high pedestal where stand only the virtuous and true, a shining example for those who wished to follow. I knew her life to be far exalted above any other I had known in its purity of purpose. And was I to shrink from her because she had at last made a misstep and fallen? For surely she had fallen, whatever her motive had been.

But my love for her engulfed all my doubts and fears, as I clasped her to my heart, crying out,

"Oh, Ulrica, how did you ever come to do it?"

She drew away and looked at me in silence. Sur-

prise at length giving place to certainty in her sad, accusing eyes, she said, "Is it possible that *you* believe me guilty?"

A moment I stood before her, my eyes falling beneath her glance. Then I seemed to shrink into nothingness, as it were, until I found myself groveling at her feet, striving to kiss the very hem of her garment, in very bitter self-condemnation. How had I dared to doubt her?"

"Nay, dear sister, you may kiss my face," she said, stooping to raise me from the ground. But I still knelt there, crying out that I was all unworthy.

"Nay, Olive," she said, "you who have entered into all my joys and sorrows, and have ever been such a true friend, such a loving sister. You, Olive, are indeed worthy of my greatest love and devotion now and always."

"I do not blame you," she continued sadly, "for the circumstances were very condemning, but still I never dreamed that you doubted me. There is one, who knows me better than you do, dear," she said a little chidingly, "one who would not believe me guilty of so heinous a crime in the face of any circumstances."

"Oh my poor Ulrica," I cried, "is it possible that you do not understand the motive which prompted Horace Ballard to absent himself at such a time, leaving those articles purposely upon the spot? It was to direct suspicion toward himself that you might go free. I saw him place them there and he believed you guilty."

Instead of the sorrow I expected this information

to bring to her, a light of great indescribable joy lit up her face, and echoed in her voice, and from that moment I knew that all was well, as she said, "Now I know."

"Why did you not tell this at the inquest?" she asked.

"I dared not implicate you irretrievably, by declaring that I knew he was innocent," I answered.

"Oh, Olive," she cried, "you are a professed Christian. Do you not know that with the truth comes the light?"

But I could make no answer, my fault seemed too glaring.

"It is quite clear to me now," she continued, "there was another participant in that scene, for I distinctively saw a hand reach out from behind that oak tree and push the poor old man to his death."

With a great rush of tears, tears such as no sorrow had ever wrung from me, I fell prostrate and wept for very joy.

"Free, free! Both free from this horrible crime," I repeated over and over.

"Tell me all, dear," I at length gasped out, laughing hysterically through my tears.

"I have also had doubts which put me to shame, Olive," she began. "In that terrible moment when Isabel Horner denounced me as murderess, I opened my lips to deny it, but as those articles belonging to Horace were found and his absence unexplained, like a flash the thought came to me, 'He has done this thing in a momentary fit of mad jealousy,' for in the few words that Mr. Ballard spoke to me, he told me

that he had assured Horace of my intention to become his wife; that Horace refused to believe it and meant to watch and see if I would keep a tryst which I myself had proposed. So dumb was I with amazement that I was incapable of movement or speech. My silence seemed to corroborate all the poor, deluded old man said, and in a moment like that, how was I to know what the demon of jealousy might whisper to Horace Ballard? You were right from the first, Olive," she said, sadly. "Horace loves me with a deathless love.

"So it was that I decided to keep silent, though they accused me of the crime, until he came and made all clear. His absence perplexed me sorely, for I knew he was not one to shift his guilt upon another. But after I had had time to allow my better judgment to predominate, I felt assured that Horace Ballard had not succumbed to temptation, if indeed he had been tempted at all, for he is greater than I, and I have had the strength to govern myself in time of such trials.

"Later, at the inquest, I knew it would be useless to profess my innocence, for I read in the faces of all a firm belief in my guilt. Besides, Horace would the sooner return and explain his absence if I were thus accused. My faith in him is firm, Olive," she concluded, proudly.

"But the note you wrote Mr. Ballard, asking him to meet you, Ulrica?" I said still in doubt, why she had desired such a meeting.

"I wrote no note," she said in surprise, "but received one from Horace. It was he I expected to meet at the bridge, else I should hardly have gone."

"Ulrica, I can guess who is the guilty one," I said, "cannot you?"

"I have not the least idea who could wish for his death," she answered.

She was unaccountably stupid in some things. I whispered a name to her. "Oh, Olive," she cried, "we must remember that it is always best to temper justice with mercy. If your surmise proves to be correct, we must lend her a helping hand."

CHAPTER XXIV.

"It matters not if mid the high wild hills
Or where the husbandman his acre tills,
If where mist-girded mountains kiss the sky,
Or lowly homes in peaceful quiet lie;
The soul by heaven divinely called to sing
Will feel the impulse of its hidden wing,
And rising high above the hampering clod,
Commune with Nature and with Nature's God."

Mortimer C. Brown.

Bitter self-condemnation was mingled with the song of thanksgiving in my heart. Aye, bitter indeed when I realized how easily I had believed in her guilt. But valuable was the lesson I learned thereby; that lesson of how deceptive are circumstances and even one's own eyesight. Many occurrences that I had scarcely deemed worthy of notice came to my mind and pointed to the truth. Now that my wits were sharpened to the truth by my recent mistakes, I asked myself why Isabel Horner had been the only one in the house who had heard the old man's death cry? Why had she clothed herself all in black, a thing I had never known her to do before? Why had she been cognizant of the death of the old man before we had told it? Why had she been so ready to name my sister murderess, when it might have been an accident, for all she was supposed to know?

I must have been mad in taking no thought of these things before. I wondered more and more at my

blindness, when I remembered the former attempts of Isabel Horner to sweep my sister from her path. I waited for no trains, but was driven post haste to the gates of Mrs. Ballard's residence. With heavy heart and bowed head I had passed through those gates but one day since. Now as I sped swiftly over the graveled driveway in my light-heartedness, these words seemed set to sweetest music, keeping time with my footsteps, "She is free, she is free, she is free." I laughed aloud for very gladness that it was so. Presently I slowed my steps in order to arouse no suspicion as to the motive of my unexpected return, for I intended to become a self-constituted detective. The eyes of love should ferret out a truth which the keen eyes of the apostles of the law had failed to do.

Mrs. Ballard spied me as I attempted to walk leisurely up the wide stone steps, and met me with open arms. Captain Woodson, who had run up from the city to cheer her during this trying time, came close behind her.

Observing my radiant face she exclaimed, "You are the bearer of good tidings. Tell us at once."

"They are both innocent," I exclaimed, crying and laughing by turns, in my joy, giving a hand to each.

"The proofs, the proofs," she cried breathlessly.

"I shall have them soon," I answered, moving toward the stairs in my eagerness to begin my search.

At that moment I looked up and beheld Isabel Horner midway on the stairs. Evidently she had heard my words, for there was a look of deadly fear stamped on her white face, and she was clutching the bannister for support.

I called attention to this fact by saying, "How alarmed you appear to be, Miss Horner. I should think you would be greatly relieved in learning that Horace Ballard, at least, is innocent of the crime."

I threw prudence to the winds, now that she had heard me declare them innocent, and I was a relentless foe.

Recovering her composure with an effort, and smiling bravely, she said, "Indeed it was the sudden joy that so nearly overwhelmed me."

"Ah," I exclaimed, looking her full in the eye. I knew that that little word conveyed volumes to this girl who stood shrinking before me.

I passed on and gained my sister's room, Mrs. Ballard following me. I unlocked the writing desk and with trembling fingers searched her papers. At last I was rewarded by finding that which I sought. Glancing hurriedly over the contents of the note I read:

"Ulrica: Dear Friend—I am about to leave forever. I must see you alone once more. Do not think it strange that I request you to meet me to-night on the little bridge at ten o'clock. I shall wait until you come.
Horace."

"Is this Horace's writing?" I asked Mrs. Ballard.

"Certainly," she answered in surprise.

But I only smiled and asked her to allow me to look through the dead man's papers.

"I wish to find a note my sister was supposed to have written in order to entice him to the bridge," I explained.

"It is in my room," she answered, leading the way.

"It was found as they were preparing him for burial. He had placed it next his heart. Charles handed it to me later, and without examining it I laid it on my desk."

There we found it. At another time I should have sworn that my sister's was the hand that penned those lines. Laying the two notes side by side I examined them closely, discovering that both were written on the same style of paper. Ah, how deeply laid was the plot, which had cost so dear to many of us. I proceeded to explain my suspicions, which were now certainties, to the wondering woman beside me.

"It is quite clear to me, Mrs. Ballard," I concluded, "that the same hand has penned them both. Evidently this person relied upon getting the one purported to be written by Horace, after it had served its intended purpose; while the other would be discovered and add another link to the chain which was to draw my sister to her ruin."

"Oh, how came you to think of all these things?" cried Mrs. Ballard, shudderingly. "I saw Isabel leaving your sister's room, looking much disturbed, this very morning."

"Yes, it would show a flaw in the evidence against my sister, if this note was found, begging her to come to the bridge at the same hour she had desired the presence of the intended victim," I said.

"Oh, it is all so horrible," exclaimed the good woman, bursting into tears.

"Come," I said, hastily, "we have other places to search. We must find where this notepaper came

from, and I believe it useless to search either Horace's or my sister's rooms."

I half dragged her to Isabel Horner's door, and together we entered and soon found several sheets of notepaper, the exact counterpart of the ones I held in my hands. But later I also found in my sister's room a quantity of the same sort of paper, from which this girl must have filched her supply, foreseeing that this emergency might arise. It could then more readily be proven that my sister had penned the lines to the old man; but not deeming it possible that she herself might be suspected, she had not taken the precaution to destroy these tale bearers.

Suddenly bethinking me that this girl must have practiced considerably in order to so perfectly simulate the chirography of my sister and Horace Ballard, I ran to the grate and pushed aside the screen, but was unrewarded by finding any proof of those attempts, though there were charred remains which proved that paper had been recently burned there. By the merest chance I perceived one corner of a sheet of writing paper protruding from under the commode, and picking it up, I triumphantly waved it before Mrs. Ballard's eyes. Upon it were written the words:

"Dear William:

"Will you be at the bri——"

Here it was discontinued, evidently not coming up to the required mark in simulating the supposed author's chirography.

"How this girl has schemed," I thought, shudderingly. She must have known that my sister was to be absent during that day and so was unlikely to meet

either Horace or his father until the time arrived for the accomplishment of that deed.

Perhaps she had also intended to bring about my sister's death if the opportunity presented itself; if not, the present alternative would serve her purpose and Horace Ballard would look with horror upon the supposed murderess. He might then turn to herself, with the munificent fortune that would then be his. Oh, she had schemed, but there were flaws. I placed the partly written note where I had found it.

With great determination, Mrs. Ballard locked the door of the room, and took away the key. Still I had another spot to search. Followed by the all too willing Mrs. Ballard, who was joined by Captain Woodson, when we reached the hall below, I led the way to the scene of the murder. With sharpened eyes I searched at the base of that old forest tree and found what I sought—a woman's footprints plainly indented in the soft earth, sufficiently plain to show that rubbers had been worn.

I pointed to them exultingly and cried, "We shall have occasion to fit another piece of footgear into a track soon."

Hastily we followed those footprints. They led us through the woodland, almost to the very door of the side entrance, and then seemed to pause at a tall laburnum bush. Searching closer we found that the rubbers had been discarded, there being five footprints without them leading to the door. Returning to the bush, we discovered the rubbers which had been imperfectly hidden beneath its foliage. For a moment

I was staggered as I recognized them. They were my sister's.

With devilish malignancy this demon had filched them from her room, during or after the storm, worn them, and placed them there, that they might be found and the web be more tightly woven about her. Or she may have intended placing them in my sister's room, but hearing us so close behind her that night had removed them in haste and entered that door just before we arrived. Oh, yes, this girl had indeed schemed, but there were flaws.

Captain Woodson informed the detective who was watching the premises, of our discoveries. "He shall blush for shame," said Mrs. Ballard, "for his stupidity."

No thrill of pity stirred my heart for the girl whose mad love had brought her to commit this horrible crime. But she had not counted upon Horace's act of shifting the accusation upon himself. That, indeed, had been no part of her plans. Neither had she suspected that his father had already disinherited him, though she must have been a witness to that scene in the garden the night before. Hence her haste in terminating the affair which had been formulating in her brain. We repaired immediately to her room, and found that the door had been forced open, and the contents were much disarranged. Nannie entered, looking wonderingly at our excited faces, and told us that Miss Horner had departed hurriedly, saying that she would send for her trunks later.

"She seemed to be much excited," continued the girl, "and did not take time to change her house

dress, but took a small hand satchel and hurried away."

"Did she walk?" inquired the detective.

"No. James had been exercising the horses and I heard her ask leave to ride one of them to the village," she answered. "He offered to saddle it for her, but she would not wait."

Sufficient had been discovered to convince any sane person that both those notes had been penned by the fair occupant of that room; and for what purpose my own could understand. While a horse was made ready to go in pursuit of the fugitive we hastily procured a pair of her dainty boots, and found as we were already convinced, that they exactly fitted those tracks nearest the side entrance.

* * * * *

Isabel Horner was never brought to justice according to the world's view of such matters. But I knew that her punishment was greater than death, for she was hopeless of ever winning the man she so madly loved. She had lost all opportunity of gaining that magnificent fortune; was a fugitive who could know no rest or peace while life lasted. After the proofs of her guilt were laid before the local authorities, my sister was released from her prison cell, and returned safely to the palatial home, which was now all our own.

To add to my joy, on arising the third morning after her release, I found on the floor of my room a letter from Horace. Evidently it had been slipped beneath the door during the night. With trembling hands I unfolded it and read:

"Olive: Dear Friend—I know all that has transpired since that night of horror when my poor father came to his death. I say that night of horror, for I think it must ever remain in my memory as such, also because of the added horror of the mistake I made in doubting your sister. Had I not already been half crazed by grievous disappointment and doubt of her integrity, which had been seething like madness in my brain during the previous twenty-four hours, I am quite certain I should have held her guiltless, though I saw her commit the crime, as I believed.

Pity for my father could not overreach my love and fear for her. So unreasoning was this fear that in my madness I sought to save her from the justice which the land metes out to the taker of human life. To flee was the only way, for I could not stand by my father's body and swear that I ~~was~~ his slayer. Though it shames me even to think of it, yet I will lay bare to you the whole of my miserable suspicions.

When I turned to leave that fatal spot, I saw you, and I believed you were an accessory to the crime. I knew that my father's threat to disinherit me and name Ulrica as heir to his wealth had been carried out, for he informed me that such was the fact, as he returned from the village that day. And I believed in that terrible moment when I saw you standing so still and making no protest, that you and she were cognizant that the will had been drawn up that very day. Oh, Olive, believe me, I was not myself, else these doubts had never risen up against you. The mad demon of jealousy had entered and taken complete possession of heart and brain, causing me to forget

my manhood and all that higher and better life for which I have been striving so long.

At the moment I saw Ulrica meet my father and my jealous fears seemed consummated, a wild desire to take his life came to me. I was still struggling against this desire, when another saved me from myself. When I thought of Ulrica as my father's wife I was goaded to such fury that I felt I ~~must~~ prevent it at all hazards. So I must hold myself a murderer to my dying day, though I have never taken conscious life knowingly.

I do not know, Olive, when I shall come back to you. I feel that I owe a debt to the one who saved me from committing that deed; and I have a work to perform connected with that one, which none other can do. It is a work of love and mercy. I will leave you to guess what it is.

I know that Ulrica will use that great wealth to the best possible advantage and so I am quite content.

I will say, in conclusion, dear Olive, I know that she will yet be mine, and I can wait. When the time arrives that you can call me brother, write, and I will come home.

For a time I must keep my whereabouts a secret, on account of the task before me, but a trusted friend in the city will forward any communication to me.

Yours in faith and love,

Horace."

Then came his friend's address. There was also inclosed a loving letter for Mrs. Ballard and the children. I read and reread his letter many times and

then answered it, though I knew it was his desire not to communicate regularly with us, on account of that task he had set himself to accomplish.

And I guessed that it was to find that poor, lost girl and save her from utter destruction. Later I found that my surmises were correct. However, I, in my selfishness, implored Horace Ballard to return to us. I longed with a great longing for the sight of his bonny face, for the sound of his cheering, helpful voice. Yes, in order to gratify my own selfish wishes I counseled him to neglect that deed of love and compassion.

Hastening to show his letter to my sister, I asked her to lend her pleadings to mine for his return.

A great flash of admiration lighted up her face, as she perused those lines, until it was fairly radiant.

"What," she exclaimed, "counsel the man to neglect a duty so urgent, just for the simple reason that we desire his presence?"

"Oh, Olive, dear, when will you learn to think of others first?"

"But, Ulrica," I protested, "he must be very unhappy away from his childhood's home, and from all his friends. Most of all, parted from you?"

"Horace Ballard will be happy no matter where his stopping place," she answered. "His is no weak nature to be unduly affected by his environments."

Nevertheless I dispatched my letter, but an answer was long in coming.

CHAPTER XXV.

“Roll on, O slow wheeled years, and bring the day
When men shall gather wealth to give away,
And spring to help when tempted nature falls,
As when a builder drops from city walls;
When to do good alone men shall be bold
And seek out suffering as they seek for gold;
When Christian women shall not wipe their feet,
Upon their fallen sisters in the street,
And calumny shall be a crime unknown
And each shall make his neighbor's wrong his own,
Begone, O hate, and wrong and war, begone!
Roll on this way, O Golden Age, roll on;
When men and angels face to face shall talk,
And earth and heaven arm in arm shall walk;
When love shall reign and over sea and shore
The peace of God shall rest forevermore.”

Mrs. Ballard was to give possession in six months. At the expiration of that time her marriage with Captain Woodson was to take place and they take up their residence in the city. At first I doubted if my sister would touch a single penny of that immense fortune; but I was in error, as usual, for as soon as it was practicable she went to the city and ferreted out a host of poor carpenters (not the wealthy contractors), and put them to work building small, home-like cottages in beautiful sequestered nooks, about the place.

Those who had never known the delights of a com-

fortable home were in due time domiciled within these nest-like cottages. Surrounding each was ample space for flower and vegetable gardens.

During those days of preparation, my sister flittered from spot to spot, pencil and paper in hand, making calculations, advising and sympathizing with each and every one. Oh, but there was rejoicing when those poor families changed their bleak quarters for those pretty homes. With nice precision my sister calculated that these cottages could be let for the same amount that had been paid for the rooms in the manor house. And after living wages were paid to the laborers, by careful and intelligent farming, there would be a surplus fund derived from the products of the many beautiful acres that would pay the expenses of the hospital which she intended to fit up in the old manor house, also the home for the aged and the little children which she was to establish in the home we now occupied.

Mrs. Ballard was aghast when my sister informed her of this last scheme. "And where will you live, pray?" she exclaimed.

"Ah, Mrs. Ballard, I shall have the loveliest home of all," she answered, smiling. "Listen while I describe it and you will find that I have reserved the best for myself, as is the nature of mankind, you know."

"The floor of my house," she began, "will be a very expensive one, covering many, many acres. Soft, velvety emerald tinted carpets, besprinkled with many-hued blossoms, shall be it's covering. The arches of my roof shall be loftier than hand of man ever builded.

The fingers of an unseen artist shall ever be busy decorating my ceiling lest I tire of gazing upon the same scene, that artist shall be forever shifting and changing form and color. At one time a bright blue, at another this blue shall be interspersed with fleecy-white clouds; at still another, a sunrise scene with rosy clouds which turn to gold as if by magic; and yet another, a glory of purple and scarlet, and the deeper gold of sunset, then again, a swift, scurrying of dark cloud pierced by the fiery dart of a lightning shaft.

"By day my house shall be lighted by an electric orb whose powerful rays encompass half the globe. By night there shall be lesser lights, which also swing from my ceiling. In my house shall be many beautiful pictures of lofty mist-capped mountains, of little glinting streams, grand old forest trees, festooned with clinging vine and creeper; of cool, shady dells, of little sun-kissed hills. Time shall ever be busy changing these pictures from emerald to scarlet and gold, and then to gray. My house shall be pervaded by the breath of countless blossoms. The four winds shall blow unrestricted through my ever-open windows, telling tales of far-off lands through the voices of my numerous aolian harp, which will have been set to music by the fingers of these self-same winds.

"A grand orchestra, composed of sweet-throated song-birds, murmuring waters, chirping insects, and the thunders roar shall ever be dispensing music which echoes and re-echoes through my halls. Was ever home more beautiful, Dorothy?" she concluded abruptly, as she noted the child whose eyes had grown round with admiration and wonder.

"Oh, Mamma," she exclaimed breathlessly, "when will it be ready for us?"

"It is ready now, my sweet," she answered.

And the little one, glancing around and understanding, cried, "Oh, I shall never want to live in a real house again. I didn't know before how lovely all these things are." And there was a new light on the child's face.

The old manor house was at once supplied with all necessary conveniences for the ill.

A beautiful flower garden was laid out, where had been only bare and unlovely ground. Not long was it ere the spacious rooms were occupied by many pitiful sights of human suffering. My sister ferreted out a poor, struggling young physician, who was fully competent, and put him in charge of the institution. He brought his old mother, his wife and children from the crowded city to that "garden of Eden," as the young wife termed the ideal spot on which stood the cottage they occupied.

My sister had thought for all; she forgot nothing, however trivial; hers was indeed one of those rare minds which though broad enough to encompass the very universe itself, yet had the discrimination which enabled it to go into the most minute details. Neither did these details worry and fret her, as they generally do the broadminded.

Among the nurses were two poor fallen girls whom she had found in the city; how I could guess by a later incident. And these poor girls gladly and thankfully accepted the chance to retrieve the past by severe and arduous service.

But my sister did not dispense her wealth indiscriminately, for when I once reminded her that that fortune was not rightfully hers, but belonged to Horace, she answered me, "It is neither Horace's nor mine, Olive, it is but placed in my hands to manage to the best possible advantage, for those who need it. Had it fallen to Horace he would also have used it as I am now doing."

During all these months no tidings of him reached us. Mrs. Ballard and the little girls, together with myself, had wept gallons of tears over his loss. My sister seldom spoke of him, but I knew that she longed for his return.

Mrs. Ballard's wedding day came at length, and the house was gaily decorated for the occasion. It was the last time that such scenes of merriment were to transpire within its walls. The numerous rooms were all occupied by the wedding guests and gay laughter and merry chatter was heard on all sides. At seven thirty P. M. on the twenty-first of December, our kind friend stood **up in** her shimmering pearl-gray robes and became Mrs. Woodson.

The ceremony was succeeded by a grand ball which lasted into the wee small hours, and the following day they departed for their new home in the city, and we were left to our possessions. I say ours, for we ever shared our worldly goods equally as sisters should. Ere the dismantling of the stately mansion was begun, we went through the rooms together, and my heart thrilled to think that all these beautiful treasures of costly furniture, hangings and priceless paintings were indeed our own.

Turning to me, my sister said: "Olive, it is very hard to give them all up, is it not?"

"Don't do it, dear," I said, "Horace will be glad to find familiar surroundings when he returns."

So I, the avowed church-going, praying Christian, sought to tempt her to keep all that needless luxury, thereby permitting the aged and the little helpless children who might find a home within its walls, to remain unprotected from the cruelties of poverty.

She was silent for many minutes, but when she spoke her voice was resolute. "Indeed, I should blush with shame did he find me so," she answered. "My other house will be more wholesome." But suddenly turning upon me, she cried, "I am tempted, Olive, I am tempted."

"That desire to be surrounded with luxury, to deck myself with shining jewels, to walk in silk attire, to have servants come at my beck and call, is strong upon me at this moment. But I must subdue it. Oh, yes, I must subdue it," she declared, turning to me, but there was an irresolute look on her face.

Little did I realize at that time, the intensity of the battle waging within her against that temptation.

"Olive, I need help," she cried, presently, actual alarm in her voice, "you must give it me."

And I again aided her by saying, "But, Ulrica, you have already done enough for strangers. You cannot aid them all. Keep this one place as it is now, and enjoy this wealth."

When she answered me, her voice had lost its indecision, and was clear and steady.

"Olive," she said, "I am disappointed in you. No one has done enough until he has done his best."

Once again my eyes sank before the accusing light in her own.

"As you say," she continued, "I cannot aid them all. Well I know that what I do for suffering humanity is but as a drop in the ocean. Still it is something, and the example may incite others to aid the helpless, and thereby bring about more good. Remember, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

"And yet, Olive," she concluded, smiling at me, "I shall follow your advice in one instance, for I intend to enjoy this wealth to its utmost limit. And truly she did, even with the worldly woes of others lying heavy at her heart, leading a life of toil and renunciation for their sakes, derive more sweetness from this life than any light nature ever dreamed of in his best moments. How mistaken is he who thinks the life of a butterfly happier than that of a toiling honey bee, for the latter finds hidden sweets which the former never knew existed. Ah, could we but fully realize that good does not end with an act of kindness, but echoes and re-echoes in the hearts of those who come after us, and its influence is never lost, how many more of us there would be, eager to set those echoes ringing.

Early the following morning my sister hastened to the city. Purchasers soon came and took away all the articles of luxury. The proceeds of the sale brought a sufficient sum to refurnish the whole house in a pretty home-like manner and also pay the greater

part of the expense for the home during the following year. Truly the voice of the tempter she heeded not. When she had little she gave her mite. When she had much she gave of her abundance. Daily she went among the people she had gathered about her, in her cheap gowns, and worn boots, one of them and yet not one of them, for where she walked the children's noisy clatter or wrangling ceased. Her very presence seemed to fill each little heart with reverential love and awe, for there was that about her strong yet gentle nature which demanded obedience and peace, though she neither chided nor commanded. Her luxury lay in the contented faces of those she had succored. Her jewels were the shining eyes of those happy little ones.

When all things were in order and we had in a manner settled down to a daily routine of life, the longing to hear the sound of Horace Ballard's voice grew so great that I asked her one day when I could write my brother to come home.

"That I cannot tell you, Olive," she answered. "I am going back to Richmond."

I gazed blankly at her and at length gasped out, "Why?"

"To assure myself of a great happiness," she said, looking away, a light of joy creeping into her eyes.

I was silent, angry and despairing. I now felt that she had at last owned herself conquered by that love which she had sworn to overcome.

"After all she is but a weak, loving woman," I told myself. I had exalted her above common humanity

and I was grievously disappointed at the turn affairs had taken.

I watched her as she stood before me with that light in her eyes deepening, deepening to still greater joy, and my anger grew apace. "Then you may go alone," I said sullenly.

"No, dear sister, you must share my happiness also. For it must bring about what will be, after all, the one supreme joy of this, my earthly existence. Yes, it shall bring it about," she declared, with such a ring of resolution in her voice that I felt doubly assured that she had ceased to struggle against that infatuation.

Neither she nor I mentioned the prospective journey for several days, and I began to hope that she had given it up and all would yet be as I so fondly hoped.

But it was not so, and the first of April found us once more domiciled in my little cottage in Richmond. We had been there but a fortnight when she and the little one were standing at the gate one evening and I was quite near as usual. The habit of following my sister about grew upon me at time passed, as also did my fear of Mark Warren. That evening Dr. Ashley paused at our gate, lifted his hat to her and with his old-time fascinating smile said, so low I scarce could catch his words, "I knew I should find you some day."

A flush so slight it was scarcely perceptible mounted to her cheek and was gone in an instant, but a great light of joy lit up her face and I grew sick at heart. She invited him in. I was not surprised. I assured myself in bitterness of spirit that nothing she ever did again would surprise me. Well I knew that no protestations of mine could turn her from her course.

Dr. Ashley's call was a lengthy one; and day after day found him in our parlor, a welcome visitor. His exertions to please extended even to Dorothy, whom he had only tolerated during those other days when he had come a-wooing. Scarcely could I treat him with common civility, so sore was my heart at this disappointing change in my sister.

Each time he would leave her, there was such a light on her face that I could only watch her in wondering dismay. I would look a little way into the future and see how this narrow souled man would squander the fortune that rightfully belonged to that most noble of men. Horace Ballard would watch and wait in vain for that letter that would never come, that letter naming him brother. I suffered tortures during those days when Dr. Ashley was ever lingering at my sister's side. More tender grew his voice each day. Deeper grew the love light in his handsome eyes, as they met her own, which never sank beneath his glance as of yore. I used sometimes to wonder why her cheek never flushed at his approach as was its wont in those other times. But then perhaps she is so sure of her happiness, I would tell myself, "that she had learned to think of it with more calmness."

The story of her change of fortune had reached Richmond long before we had. Many called upon us who had never deigned to recognize us before. Our former supposed disgrace was conveniently forgotten.

As the spring advanced, accompanied by Dr. Ashley, we made excursions to the self-same spots we had visited in those other days, but my sister never permitted Dr. Ashley even to take her hand in helping her

in or out of the carriage, which she had purchased to carry the sick from place to place.

One evening I saw her looking thoughtfully at my downcast face. Coming to me with a loving caress she asked wonderingly, "Olive, why are you so sad?"

But I made her no answer.

"Surely, dear," she then said, "you will share with me this one great joy of my life, for I feel almost assured of it at last. I know you are really disappointed that I do not call Horace home, but you must be patient."

But still I made her no answer. What use for me to tell her that I had no sympathy for her love. What seemed to me worse than all was that she never struggled against it, but had completely surrendered and while admitting by each act that she was defeated grew more content and deeply joyous each day. In very bitterness of spirit I assured myself that she had conceived the wild idea of bringing about this man's reformation, that instead of sinking to his level it should be her life's work to raise him to hers. "What madness," I would oft times say to myself. "Why it were as impossible a task as it would be to roll the globe on which we dwell, straight through the pearly gates."

So it was that I grew more bitter toward her each day. Three long months were passed in this way and still no word came from Horace. Dr. Ashley was now very anxious to take my sister into public places. He was proud that his friends, no—he had few friends,—his acquaintances, should see him carry off the rich prize which she had now become.

One beautiful Sabbath morning we started for a

drive, accompanied by Dr. Ashley. When about three blocks from our cottage we heard the shouts of several small boys who were running in front of a woman, seeking to retard her progress. She was gesticulating wildly, cursing and calling them horrible names. As we came nearer I noticed that she was a very small woman and there was something familiar in her appearance. Her silken gown was much the worse for wear, was dusty and soiled with earth stains. Despite the stupid, inert expression, which intoxication alone can lend the countenance, I recognized Alice Ashley. Dr. Ashley also recognized her, and giving whip to the horses, would have passed her by quickly, but my sister, who was occupying the seat by his side, placed her hands firmly on the ribbons, bringing the carriage to a standstill. Ere I divined her purpose, she sprang out and went swiftly to where that poor, fallen creature stood, and cried, "Alice, dear Alice, is it really you? Oh, I am so glad to find you!"

There were many whom we knew standing on their door steps, or at their gates, observing this scene with shocked faces as my sister implored that besotted creature to take her hand in friendship. Alice Ashley looked at her a moment and then at him, whose proud, happy wife she had been before Ulrica had come between them and drew back angrily. Fearing lest she make a terrible scene, I cried, "Ulrica, come away at once!"

Never did I feel one-half so small as when she turned her accusing eyes upon me and said, "Oh, Olive, and you are a Christian woman."

I went to her side, proud, oh how proud to follow

in her footsteps, and added my entreaties to hers. Evidently the drunken stupor had gained control over Alice Ashley, for she fell against my sister, soiling her white robes with the earth stains from her own tattered garments. We half led, half dragged her and placed her in the carriage.

Dorothy cried when she saw how sick poor butterfly appeared. Oh, truly, poor butterfly, with soiled and broken wings.

"I must return home, Dr. Ashley," said my sister quietly.

"You are not taking her there, are you?" he asked scornfully.

"Yes," she answered.

He immediately took his departure when we reached our gate. Lest he soil his white purity, this man would not even assist us to the house with our almost inanimate burden. However, we soon had her safely in my sister's own bed, and she fell into a drunken slumber, which lasted many hours. My sister watched over her all that time, and together we removed the soiled garments from the poor, wasted frame and replaced them with my sister's spotless ones. We soon had the pretty light hair brushed from the white brow and she appeared almost as she had in those other days.

When she woke and recognized her surroundings she sprang up and frantically tore into shreds the garments upon her. She reviled my sister in most terrible, most shocking language. She heaped reproaches upon her, which none but one with Christlike patience could

have borne. My sister's face was wet with tears, as she sought to quiet her.

"Oh, Alice, do not leave me, but only listen," she pleaded, so earnestly that the maddened woman's passion subsided somewhat and she fell back upon the bed, too dizzy from her recent debauch to stand alone. Then my sister kneeled there beside and told her all, all. She succeeded in impressing the whole truth upon the woman's mind. She made her understand how great indeed had been that love which had brought about such deplorable results. In Alice Ashley's eyes a strange, new light was creeping, as my sister said in pleading tones, "Alice, dear, I have so longed to see you all these years, to help, to comfort you. Take my hand in friendship once more, I implore you."

With a rush of tears, Alice Ashley reached out both hands and cried, "Ulrica, it is I who am not worthy to touch your hand. I have been so weak and you so strong."

It was thus that peace was established between them.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"CHANGE."

"Why this repining,
Hope's star is shining
To light me to the other shore.
My feet are shod,
With faith in God,
Life's thorns can pierce them never more."

Dr. Ashley did not make his appearance on the following day, but the day after found him again at my sister's side. She received him as usual, and Alice's name was mentioned by neither. What cared this selfish, narrow souled man, whether she lived or died. He had brought her low, had squandered her fortune, and he was done with her. Just as I believed he would serve my sister, should the opportunity present itself, and that opportunity seemed very imminent. I soon left them together and joined Alice, who was sitting just outside the open window, beneath a shade tree. Her quiet face depicted no emotion save scorn, as we heard Dr. Ashley's voice, which had grown wonderfully tender, as he said in pleading tones,

"Ulrica, dear Ulrica, I can stand this suspense no longer. When will you be my wife?"

She moved away a little as he sought to take her hands. We could see her plainly through the open window, as she stood in silence, while such a light of joy lit up her face, such joy as I had never beheld on countenance before. He read her even as had I, and

again sought to take her hands. My heart cried out for Horace Ballard, despairingly in that moment, when I was about to see my worst fears consummated. Still she was silent, while that light gathered and grew in her eyes, with a radiance almost divine.

"Oh, she loves him so dearly," I thought bitterly, and hid my face in my hands. "I will not witness this thing," I inwardly cried.

Dr. Ashley's voice at length broke the silence, a triumphant ring in his tones as he went yet nearer her. "Say that you will be my wife, very soon, Ulrica."

When I looked up she had stepped nearer the window in order to avoid his touch. Her tones were also triumphant as she answered, "Nay, Dr. Ashley, it can never be."

Did I hear aright or was I dreaming? Dr. Ashley's face gradually assumed an ashy whiteness, even as with fear, for he felt that she, and her princely fortune, were surely slipping through his fingers.

"You cannot mean it, you are but testing my love for you," he cried, a little relief creeping into his voice.

"I repeat that it can never be," she said quietly.

He realized then by her firm tones and steady glance that no jesting was intended.

"Then why have you led me to hope in this manner?" he cried, fierce anger in his tones.

"I did not intend to cause you pain," she answered. "I do not believe that one thrill of honest love for me has never stirred your heart. I but sought your presence in order to assure myself that my love for you was dead, quite dead. I was but fully convinced that

it was so when the word wife, in connection with myself, fell from your lips."

"Ah, I understand," he cried, "you used me as a sort of subject, something to experiment upon."

Taking his hat he turned to leave, angry despair written in his face.

"Stay," she said, "if I can render you any assistance I shall—"

"No," he interrupted, as the last remnant of pride he possessed flared up grandly, "you would give me a small portion of your gold, even as you would the veriest beggar, who crept to your door. No, a thousand times no!"

"Do not leave me thus, Dr. Ashley," she said, reaching out her hand imploringly. "See, I beg of you, to take my hand in friendship."

Something in the glance of her pitying, tear dimmed eyes impelled him to do so.

"Oh, Dr. Ashley," she said, "if you did but know the joy of living that higher and better life, you would be a changed man. Be my friend. Allow me—"

"Your sermons are lost upon me," he interrupted, scoffingly, dropping her hand. Again he turned to take his leave, when the immensity of his disappointment rushed full upon him. So, returning to her side once more, he pleaded with her. His eloquence might have moved a heart of stone. But hers was no weak nature to swerve from the "way," though it did cause temporary pain.

"If you send me from you in this manner," he cried, "I am ruined, and without hope."

Raising her hand and pointing upward, in pitying

yet firm tones, she cried, "Nay, there is hope for all. Look up!"

Without a word he turned and left her and we knew his face no more.

In the silence that followed I again hid my face in my hands, the joy bells once more set to sweetest music in my heart. O joy, joy, indeed, she had proven to be true and great. She was strong when I had thought her weak. I told myself then and there that never again would I doubt her, no matter what came to pass. And then, what could her refusal of Dr. Ashley imply save that she loved another. In that moment I felt assured that my fond hope of calling Horace Ballard brother would yet be realized.

When I looked up I found Alice regarding me strangely. "You were surprised," she said calmly. "I knew what her answer would be before she gave it."

I entered the house and ran swiftly up the stairs in search of my sister. I found her at the door of that room which had been closed so long.

"The last test must be applied," she said, stepping lightly over the threshold with no sign of the terrible agony which had torn at her heart during the night she had last passed within its walls. Thick lay the dust on mantels, floor and window sills. She ran and opened wide the windows, admitting the pure air and blessed sunshine once more. Stooping she lifted from the floor a dried and withered blossom, that little flower whose very touch had thrilled her with such despair now lay in her hand, not more dead than was her love for its giver.

She contemplated it silently for a few moments and said, "You see I have ruled my spirit, Olive, I have conquered."

"And now," she resumed musingly, as if speaking to herself, "now that I am so entirely done with that part of my existence, now that that great obstacle has been overcome, surely my future will be more restful. Oh, it will be good to rest, if for ever so short a time."

Some way the words smote upon my hearing with terrible significance. "How foolish I am," I mentally exclaimed. "What can she mean save that all the bitter past is over and the future spent in peace and love will be the sweeter, because of that very bitterness."

"Now I may call my brother home, may I not, Ulrica?" I asked.

So sure was I that her answer would be yes, I stood smiling for very gladness and striving to read that answer in her face. But failing in that my suspense grew unbearable. I longed to hear that little word yes fall from her lips, as eagerly as would a waiting lover. Yet when the answer came it was "No." The musical chimes of the joy bells in my heart ceased of a sudden.

"Why?" I at length gasped out.

"Because I am unworthy of him, he is yet too far removed from such as I," she answered calmly.

As I was about to refute this statement she raised her hand to enjoin silence on my part, and then continued, "Look you here, Olive, can you not realize that Horace Ballard is greater, far greater than I? Compare his clean and spotless life to my own, and you will understand?"

I stared at her in speechless amazement. I would never admit that any life was cleaner or more spotless than was hers.

"But, Ulrica," I expostulated, "you have overcome every temptation of your life, your motives have ever been as pure as the virgin snow."

"That may be, Olive," she answered, "but you must admit that I have lacked that wisdom necessary to so order my life that I could find it possible to obey the Divine command—Avoid the appearance of evil. This wisdom Horace Ballard possesses to a much greater degree than I do. The two great mistakes in life which I have made debar me from accepting his love, for they prove that I am not his equal. I cannot, I dare not, offer this contaminated body, this scarred and broken heart to one like him."

"Broken, your heart is broken, Ulrica?" I exclaimed in dismay, as I looked closer at her face, and for the first time perceived a new and strange shadow resting there. An indefinable dread seized upon me.

"Yes, broken," she reiterated calmly, "for when I tore away the last tendrils of that love which had wound itself about every fibre of my being, I realized that my heart was broken."

With an effort I roused myself from the horror which was creeping upon me, and calling my more practical self to my aid, said, "Then let Horace Ballard's love heal your wound, Ulrica. You are making a mistake. If he is greater than you, then rest assured that he had not erred in placing his love upon you. He is willing and eager to take you as you are."

But she only smiled and said: "Never can two be

blended into one, unless each possess those attributes of wisdom and purity to an equal degree. I repeat I am not Horace Ballard's equal."

"Oh, Olive," she cried, scornfully, regretfully, "too much of darkness and sin have been in my own self, else these temptations that have risen in my pathway had never been temptations. There was that in my own sinful nature from which sprang these dark and unholy desires. The gulf of death lies between that most noble man and myself. Nothing but death can purify me to the degree wherein I could feel justified in offering myself to him.

"Listen, Olive," she went on, coming nearer me, "listen while I tell you my belief (nay my certainty) in regard to this mutual love of man and woman. So great a thing is it, that though one should attain to that high estate of godliness, still must he be ever incomplete, ever reaching out after that other half of his being. Ever must he be drawn to earth life again and again, until that for which he seeks is found, is able to recognize him. Indeed it is, it must be, that two were one, when first plunged out, into separate life from the Godhead, and in the darkness and turmoil of earthly existence, they are torn asunder. So it is they wander up and down the earth with aching, craving, bleeding hearts which nothing but the blood from that other heart can heal; nothing but that other heart can fill this aching void, or satisfy this deep craving. And for this we are ever searching and in our blindness we hearken to the desires of the flesh and so mistake passion for love. And this mistake is bound to bring about disaster and pain, for all that pertains to flesh

is painful. But when these two selves are once more united by the love which is of Divine origin no power in the universe can tear them asunder. So purified is that sort of love that it ceases to be of the earth earthy, and so it is, Olive," she finally concluded, "that I can not accept Horace Ballard's love, because I am yet unworthy and so cannot respond to it; and yet I seem to know that he is for me. I seem to hear this love knocking at the door of my heart, in tender, pleading tones, begging admittance, yet I have not the assurance to rise and do its bidding. Though I fain would, yet must I not, for when I come to him I must come pure and undefiled. I repeat that death alone can cleanse me."

A horrible fear fell upon me. "Had her many trials in life unhinged her mind? Had that battle been too fiercely fought during these four years? Had she, as well as that love, received her death wound? As I looked upon her face with that strange light still hovering upon it, I felt, I knew that she had been done to death.

Again calling my more practical self to my aid, I said impatiently, "Ulrica, I do not pretend for a moment to comprehend your meaning. I do so long to see you grasp and hold this good man's love which is held out to you. You have never known any happiness of your very own."

"Oh, Olive," she cried reproachfully, "do you not know that the great secret of true happiness is in laying self aside and living for others? This I have struggled all my life to do, and in a measure I feel that I

have succeeded; therefore I have seen much happiness."

And again I stood abashed in her presence. Nevertheless my decision to send for my brother grew firmer in my mind. I assured myself that I needed him. I was truly alarmed about my sister, for that change in her grew hourly more perceptible.

That very day I worded a letter as follows:

"Richmond, Va.,
July —, 18—

"Horace, dear brother:—

"Come home at once.

Olive."

My sister still went about busying herself as usual, but all enthusiasm seemed to have died within her. Peace, a great still peace, settled upon her. She seemed, as it were, to be one who was done with all things. Time and again I would assure myself that she could not resist Horace's pleadings when he came. His was a more evenly balanced nature. He would point out to her wherein lay her mistake, that her wild ideas of unworthiness were far-fetched and unreal. She whose soul was whiter than the virgin snow. Had she not come to that lofty state that none may reach save those that have purified themselves of all sinful desires? She unworthy to mate with any one, even though it be this great and good man, whom I felt towered above any of his kind. It was absurd.

"Oh, yes," I would tell myself, "the very strength of his love will draw her back to life and earthly happiness, from which she seems gradually but surely drifting day by day."

Almost a month passed and daily, hourly, momentarily I was expecting our little front gate to open and admit my brother. Oh, with what desperate longing I waited for the fulfillment of my hopes and plans. Alice was still with us and was to accompany us back to our California home and assist in the care and teaching of the children. She had ever loved little children and was rejoiced at the prospect of being among them in so helpful a capacity.

My sister had occupied that chamber opening on to the balcony ever since throwing wide the door on that memorable day when she had refused Dr. Ashley.

One morning, while the shadows were still hovering thick and dark in rooms and hallway I rapped upon her door, for she had bade me call her early. Waiting and receiving no response, I tried the latch, which yielded to my touch. My glance first rested upon her where she lay so still on her white bed. The reddening east lent a rosy flush to her face, beautifying it beyond words to describe. Her dark curls strayed over the white brow in rich glossy profusion. Such a light of indescribable peace lingered on that face that I stood and smilingly contemplated her. Surely Gyenth in her lonely rose-curtained tower had not been one-half so lovely I thought proudly, gladly. Ah even yet I love to linger on the memory of that scene. But—

Presently my glance left her face and rested upon the white arm hanging over the bedside. I saw something drop to the floor, a little speck, and after a long interval, another. What horror was this that was

creeping upon me? That was chilling my blood, that was stifling my very heart beats?

Slowly my glance followed a little dark stream that trickled across the painted floor to my very feet. Mechanically spellbound, I stooped and dipped my hand in it. I was standing in a pool of blood. My skirts were all bedrabbled with it.

With a smothered cry I ran to the bedside and placed my hand on my sister's face. It was cold, with that icy coldness which none can mistake.

My frantic screams rang through the house, as I smoothed her face over and over, that face which would light up with love for me never more.

Dimly, as through a mist, I saw Alice rush in and take away the frightened weeping Dorothy who was just awakened. Through the horrible blackness of my despair the thought of Horace came to me. I needed him, indeed! Oh, why was he so long in coming? Even in that moment my wish for his presence was gratified, for I caught the sound of a familiar step, and looking up found him beside me. An unspeakable agony shone in his face one moment and then vanished, as he took all that was mortal of my sister in his arms, smoothed back the curls from the white brow, kissed it reverently, saying, "Yes, these things must be."

Laying her gently back on the pillow he turned to me, though his grief must have been a hundred fold my own, and said: "Your brother will comfort you, Olive."

It was then that I fully realized that there was no hope. She was dead, quite dead.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"WAITING."

"Serene I fold my hands and wait,
Nor care for wind, or tide or sea;
I rave no more, 'gainst time or fate,
For lo! my own shall come to me.

I stay my haste, I make delays,
For what avails this eager pace?
I stand amid the eternal ways
And what is mine shall know my face.

What matter if I stand alone
I wait with joy the coming years;
My heart shall reap where it has sown,
And garner up its fruit of tears.

The stars come nightly to the sky,
The tidal waves unto the sea,
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,
Can keep my own away from me."

Eighteen years have come and gone since those words were spoken to me: "Your brother will comfort you, Olive." And he has comforted me indeed. Scarcely a day has passed since that I have not felt his loving handclasp and heard his words of helpful cheer.

As I sit at my window today in our California home, I glance out into that garden of the gods, and

see him wave his hand at me, as he passes, his handsome face alight with brotherly love. I smile back at him and am content.

Though this man's love for all that has life seems unlimited, still I feel that he holds me a little dearer than any other, and the knowledge fills me with delight. During these eighteen years his name has become a power in the community, where we live, and also far beyond. His voice is heard abroad in the land, advocating all that upholds and advances mankind; suppressing the evils which retard their progress. He has become a most eloquent orator, who has many calls to speak before large assemblages, for the cause of the laboring classes. And never has he failed to bring the rich man and the poor into closer sympathy and understanding; breaking down those lofty barriers of pride which stand between, bringing them so low, indeed, that each might reach over and clasp hands, realizing that they belong to one and the same family; that family which makes of all humanity one vast brotherhood. A score of ministers of the gospel must needs live as many lives of faithful preaching of the word in order to bring about the results that Horace Ballard has, and yet he is just in the prime of his glorious manhood.

The text from which he teaches the word is ever taken from that sweetest commandment, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Never was there in the vineyard a more faithful laborer. If ever temptation comes to him it quickly and surely dies in the white

light which illuminates his soul from within. The purity of his life is something sublime.

And that strange religion of his he still holds fast; that religion which forbids all fear of the Creator, because its true disciples have naught to fear and all to love. But I cannot fully understand this. While I feel that I may be weighed down by prejudice, by preconceived ideas, I have not the will power to throw them off. I fear to throw them off.

Horace Ballard's self imposed task of finding and saving that haughty and wicked girl who had taken his father's life, had been accomplished, when he received the summons home.

I pictured to myself how that proud creature had melted 'neath his kindly care for her future. How she had been reunited with the heartbroken parents and sorrowing sister, in a distant land, becoming a solace to them instead of a grievous burden. Aye, truly it was best that justice be tempered by mercy.

During these eighteen years I have been in painful doubt as to the salvation of my sister's soul. Did she dare go before her maker, her hands red with her own blood? Had that garment of the soul, that garment which she chose to believe so impure, become an unbearable burden? Or was another's hands stained with her precious blood? Scores of times these questions rise and remain unanswered in my mind. A few days before her death she had made her will and what was left of that immense fortune went where it rightfully belonged. She had also said to me, "Olive, let no false pride sway you.

If anything happens to me, allow Horace to care for you and Dorothy."

I had promised that it should be so. Had she at that time conceived the idea of taking her life? Or had she felt the change that was coming upon her, for ever did she speak of death as but a change. Had she reached that state of knowledge and purity where the veil which hides eternity seemed but of gossamer thinness; and her eyes brighter from the light within pierced the folds which are so heavy to the common mind? This question also remains unanswered. Horace is firm in the belief that she did not lift a hand against her life.

And I, I am much changed, for no one could live in the light of Horace Ballard's presence and not become a better man or woman. Though, in a measure, I am still impatient, I still love my comfort over well. As for instance, this very moment I hear the angry, fretful complaining of an old, old man who came to us in an almost dying condition a few days since. I know that I should go to him. He is but in the adjoining room, the one occupied by my sister while with us, for some inexplicable reason he insists upon remaining in that room. So I do not go to him, for I do so love to sit quietly here and watch the evening shadows creep over that low green mound out among the lilies, for we had laid all that was mortal of my sister there to sleep.

I do so love to watch the red rays of the setting sun gleam on the white monuments, making it glow as with rosy life. And besides, I wish to read awhile. I wish to read these glowing accounts of a young

girl who, coming into a fortune, has beggared herself for charity's sake. I read on, as follows, heedless of the old man's cries.

"It was a great surprise to Miss Hayden's host of friends, when she made this disposal of her lately inherited fortune. She is beautiful, talented and well educated, but has been from infancy trained to a life of usefulness, for her parents were parsimonious to a degree. Now this beautiful young girl has gone on the stage, drawing houses, night after night, which an experienced actress might envy. It is also known that she gives to worthy ones the greater part of her large salary. Many that come but for an evening's amusement, go away resolved to lead a different life, incited thereto by this girl's shining example. Her talent borders on genius. She has ennobled the profession, has raised it to a plain on which it never rested before. She——"

Dorothy comes clattering in at this moment—Dorothy, who is now one of these strange, new women, who wears abbreviated skirts, rides a wheel and talks politics. She is very sweet and kind, but nothing like her mother.

"Auntie," she says, "can't you do something to quiet that old man? I heard him calling for some one and went to him, but he threw the goblet which was left by the bedside at me, and told me to get from his sight."

Smiling she shakes the water from the front breadth of her skirt and goes on her way.

But still I keep on with my reading until his voice

is raised to a higher pitch, and I grow more and more disturbed, as I hear his unreasonable railings.

"Here am I, a dying man, and not a soul to speak to. If I could I would leave this cursed place. Here are a dozen women sitting with folded hands, idling away time, while I am dying without help. I was told that I would have care here, that in this one spot on the earth the Golden Age had set in. It is a lie, a cursed lie. I never was in such a miserable hole. Do they think I will leave my money for them to squander? If so, they are fools. I'll not die. I'll get out of this yet and burn my money. It's all in bank notes, every rap of it. All but that cursed farm and that she devil's got that. I hate women, the vampires; I hate them!"

And so, on and on, an endless tirade of abuse and oaths fall from the lips of this wicked old man. I decide that I will not trouble myself with him, when Horace looks in through the half open door and says, "Olive, dear, won't you try to quiet and comfort the poor old man? I have not a moment to spend with him, for little Mary is about gone and wishes to see me. I must make haste to the hospital."

I at once spring up to do his bidding. Not for worlds would I refuse a wish of his. I take my paper. What better can I do than read to this old man of this girl's noble deeds.

After abusing me as long as he desires, he permits me to read aloud to him, often interrupting me with "I don't believe a word of it. It's a lie, an infernal lie. There's not a woman in the world that

would do such a thing. If she did she'd be a fool, a damnable fool!"

I rise from my chair in anger and am about to leave him when he asks more quietly, "Do you believe that tale?"

"Certainly," I answer.

"Don't go away," he finally says in an imploring tone.

I remain and find that he is subdued into silence. After a long interval he suddenly says, "Will you do something for me?"

"If it is possible," I answer.

"Write that girl then, to come out here. I want to look upon such a one before I die. If she is so good she will not refuse the request of a dying old man."

"I will ask Horace," I say doubtfully.

"Pshaw! What has he to do with it?" he exclaims angrily. "Write now, I want to see it done. I can't wait to die, and I must see that girl."

He grows more angry and impatient, so I make haste to comply with his wishes. I look at my paper and find her address. "It must be ten days or possibly a fortnight before she will arrive, if she comes at all," I tell him. I explain to him that likely she is under a contract for the season and will find it impossible to accede to my request. He will not heed me and bids me write in such pleading terms that as I dispatch my letter I also feel that there is a chance of her coming to us.

Oh, but the following days are weary ones! This old man who will not give his name grows hourly

more irritable and impatient. And he will ofttime curse this Miss Hayden for her delay in coming. He will command me to leave him and then as often command my presence. My patience is indeed sorely tried. It is now ten days since that letter was dispatched, and the old man is dozing, while I tiptoe to the window and stand looking out. The door opens and admits some one, but thinking it is one of the nurses, I do not turn around.

"I am come, my friend," I hear a voice say; a voice that stills my very heart-beats, and looking around I stand immovable, listening, listening, listening!

I see a young girl standing with her clear profile toward me, slightly leaning above the old man, whose eyes are now wide open, staring spellbound and he is also listening. As she lays her white hand gently, compassionately upon his forehead, he quivers from head to foot and springs up, crying out, "Who are you, girl?"

"I am Esther Hayden, whom you wished to see," she answers.

With increased horror in his wildly staring eyes, he slowly creeps to the wall and cries, fearfully, "Go away, go away! You have come to haunt me in my dying moments. I murdered you long years ago."

His voice still sinking lower and lower, he goes on, "Don't you remember how I crept through the window of your room in the dead of night? Don't you remember how I offered to spare your life, in spite of the scandals I read about you, if you would come back to me? Don't you remember how you

refused and looked with pitying eyes upon me? How you dared not call for help, because I held that knife ready to plunge into your heart, for I was not to forego my revenge. But I wished even then to save you all the pain possible, so I cut the vein in your wrist and stood long and watched the life blood flow. Oh, I hugged myself with delight and scarce could keep my hands out of it. Don't you remember how, when you were too weak to move, you even then looked upon me with pitying, forgiving eyes. The same as you are now doing?"

His voice again rises and the room rings with his terrified screams as he cries again and again, "Take it away! Take it away!"

Oh, heaven, whose death scene has he described? And I still stand and listen, listen, listen, as this girl turns to me and says, "The poor man is delirious. I fear that I have frightened him."

Oh, heavens, this voice, this voice, like some long forgotten strain of music comes stealing down the corridors of eighteen long, dead years, thrilling me through and through with a strange joy which I cannot, I dare not attempt to define. Before my eyes gathers a mist through which I see this girl standing before me, in her fresh youthful beauty, white and pure as a tall, spotless lily. I catch the gleam of a halo of golden wavy hair, I see that she possesses the grace of a goddess. I see that her white gown is cheap and much worn; that her boots are dusty from traveling.

I cling to the window casement for support, and as yet I have not dared to meet the glance of her

eyes, which are so deeply, darkly blue. She sees something strange in my behavior and draws nearer, and as she comes I am filled with such a strange, wild, incomprehensible joy that I am still incapable of movement. The old man has ceased his cries and I look beyond this girl and see Horace, who has just entered the room, turn and also stand listening, listening, as she speaks again, but her words are lost upon me.

She turns to Horace and their eyes meet. For long they stand thus and then a light breaks over his face, a light even as of *recognition*, a light of such great joy that I am almost dazzled by its brightness. Oh, truly, it is that light which never yet shone on land or sea, that has come and settled in his deeply tender eyes, and in this girl's face that light is reflected, yet there is no flutter of white eyelid, no flush mantles the white purity of cheek or brow. A sort of wondering gladness that is strange and sweet, is the only perceptible change on the lovely face.

In this strange wild moment, even I seem to realize how great a thing is love when shorn of its earthly principles, when soul comes face to face with, and recognizes that other parts of its being. In another moment Horace is at my side. Placing a chair for me, he leads me to it, and turning to this girl he says, his deep voice trembling, "I fear my sister is not quite well, Miss Hayden."

"Oh, what is so strange, Horace?" I cry, with an effort, saving myself from unconsciousness.

"Olive, dear, try to collect yourself," he says in

tones that have grown firmer, but none the less joyous.

I offer Miss Hayden my hand, ashamed of my seeming lack of hospitality. But as I feel her touch I again cry, "Oh, Horace, what is so strange?" and my senses leave me.

One month has passed since Esther Hayden came to us. By degrees I have learned to bear the indescribable joy which her presence brings me, also has that old man who still lingers waiting each day to die. Hour after hour she sits beside him, talking to him, pleading with him and he is a changed man. He has told her where his wealth is buried, enjoining her to see that the rightful heir came into possession. "You will understand many things when I am dead," he has said time and again to her. He is indeed a changed man, but still maintains the strictest secrecy in regard to his name.

Mrs. Woodson and Alice have run up from the city today. Alice, who after five years of patient toil among the sick and old and little children had become an honored and beloved wife. They are with us now, and as Esther Hayden leaves the room in response to that old man's cries, Mrs. Woodson says meditatively, "Some way, Miss Hayden does not seem an entire stranger."

Alice also speaks up at once. "She affects me in the same manner. Why the moment I heard her voice I——"

She does not finish her sentence, but she and Mrs. Woodson exchange glances.

I say nothing but only smile, as I think how this

girl has crept into my heart and taken the place that had been vacant for eighteen long years.

After my friends have taken their departure I turn my steps to the garden and pass slowly on toward that low, green mound, which I visit daily, near the sunset hour. I hear Horace's voice and pause. He and Esther Hayden are standing near the gleaming white marble speaking of my sister. Whatever his words, they are filling this girl's eyes with a most wonderful light of joyful comprehension. I move a little nearer, a strange, uncanny feeling at my heart. I see him smooth the curls from the white brow and kiss it with reverent lips, just as he had done that other one in long past years. I see him take her lovely face between his hands and look long into her beautiful eyes and say: "Esther, sweet, do you love me?" just as he had said to that other one in long, past years.

"Why, Horace, you know I do," she answers in smiling surprise, just as that other one did in long past years.

His voice thrills with an infinite joy as he cries. "Oh love, you have come to me. Time nor space, nor any power in the universe has kept you from me."

A mad pain of jealousy suddenly seizes me. I rush across that low mound, and fall at their feet crying: "Oh Horace, brother, I cannot bear that you should be untrue to *her*."

But he lifts me up and whispers in trembling tones, "Dear Olive, I am not untrue to her. Do you not understand?"

And this girl puts her arms about me and hides her face on my shoulder and in turn whispers, "Olive, if Horace is your brother, then I am your sister, for we are one."

At sound of her voice speaking my name, and feeling that loving *familiar* caress, I am filled with a wonderful peace and deep content.

The veil is rent asunder and I come into the light, which is the truth and I know she is my *sister*.

When that old man dies we find among his scanty effects a letter addressed to Dorothy. This letter is signed Mark Warren. My forgiving tears fall on his dead face, as I realize that through him we lost, yet through him we received our own again.

THE END.

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